

**The Uses of Sam Hui -- An Investigation of the Formation
of Cultural Identity in Hong Kong**

BY

IP PUI YEE

B.A. The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1991

THESIS

**Submitted to the Graduate School of
The Chinese University of Hong Kong
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree**

**Master of Philosophy in
English (Comparative Literature and Cultural Studies)**

Hong Kong

July 1994

UL

Thesis

ML

3502

H85I6

1994



W. P. Y. Y.

W. P. Y. Y. The Chinese University of Hong Kong

THE CHINESE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

Submitted to the Graduate School
The Chinese University of Hong Kong
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Philosophy

English
Chinese Studies

Hong Kong

1995

Abstract

Sam Hui, whose popularity as a local performing artist takes root in a series of works ranging from popular songs and lyrics to TV shows and mainstream movies, has been put to various kinds of use in the popular culture in Hong Kong. His successful career as a star started in the 70's when Hong Kong was undergoing substantial economic growth and unprecedented technological advancement. With the mass media gradually set in place, these gave rise to a new habitual practice of daily life which fashioned cultural sensitivity and fostered the dynamic cultural process of identity formation. Sam Hui is himself a model of cultural history who has lived through a popular career spanning the last three decades of British colonial rule in Hong Kong. The popular uses of Sam are partly the massive appropriations of the media, but partly, also, the persistent changes the superstar confronts himself with throughout his creative career. Started out as a westernized band singer in the 70's, Sam was most original in his attempt to localize his work through musical and linguistic re-orientation, as well as experimentation in new forms of film and TV programme, even up till his retirement in the early 90's. The result is, I argue, a set of new habits shared by the common people to whom his works are addressed. To investigate Sam Hui is not only to unveil the reasons for his success, but, through

him, to understand better why the people of Hong Kong need him in the formation of cultural identity. This thesis is an attempt to mediate the colonial history of Hong Kong with the cultural history of Sam's rising popularity. By analyzing the dynamic power of different kinds of cultural users in the making of cultural spaces, I argue for the significance of the play of difference and identification, and the formation of multivocalic identities.

Acknowledgement

Many thanks to the following beautiful souls who have both technically and materially contributed to the fruition of this thesis; and supported me before, during and after the work with patience and passion.

Dr. Chan Ching Kiu, Stephen

Mr. Cheung Fai

Ms. Teng Yue Yuan, Anne

Some other caring lecturers and beloved friends yet to name.

Special thanks to the following who have kindly supplied me with the most treasurable information and materials:

Mr. Chang, Carl, General Manager, Commerical Radio

Mr. Kwan W.L., William, Regional A & R Director,
Polygram Record Ltd.

Ms. Lau Yuen Seung, Cynthia, Committee Leader, The
Universal Sam Hui Fan Club

Mr. Wong Chi Chung, Alvin, DJ, Commerical Radio

CONTENTS

| | | |
|-----|---|----|
| I | Articulating Hong Kong Culture/Identity | 1 |
| II | Popular Culture and Cultural Identification | 17 |
| III | Sam Hui in Use | 39 |
| IV | Identity Formation as Voice Formation | 59 |
| V | Cultural Identity and The Ordinary | 82 |
| | Bibliography | 87 |
| | Appendix | 94 |

The Uses of Sam Hui -- An Investigation of the Formation of Cultural Identity in Hong Kong

I Articulating Hong Kong Culture/ Identity

1.1 Articulating Hong Kong -- History, Culture and Identity

To investigate the cultural identity of Hong Kong is a complex task. History and cultural differences do not allow discourses on identity to offer a direct and steadfast step-in place here. Hong Kong is by birth an orphanic colony. The tiny southern fishing village did not earn the interest of the Qing Dynasty in the 19th century. Even when she was ceded to Britain in 1842, she remained still a neglected child. The late Qing Empire, surely, was too fragile to pay attention to this negligible South China fishing village. The Republic of the early 20th century was too busy to deal with the legacy of the scramble for concessions by other countries, in addition to problems caused by the civil wars. Even the Communist regime after 1949 chose not to infuse socialist practices to the territory still under British rule. Serving

as the only window to the world during the period of close-door policy in China, it was inevitable that Hong Kong be kept "open" in order to get the minimum access to the developments of international affairs, both politically and economically. The People's Republic of China found itself in an ambiguous position to want to enhance and demand patriotic and nationalistic sentiment from Hong Kong -- for a pro-communist Hong Kong would mean a complete cut from ties with the world (basically the capitalist First World), whilst keeping Hong Kong politically and economically open would mean an indispensable incompatibility with her own state ideology. After the insulting downfall of the Gang of Four at the end of the Cultural Revolution, the same demand seemed all the more embarrassing because it risked undermining the socialist apparatus and Deng Xiaoping's attempted socio-economic reforms in coping with the increasingly global trend of democracy and capitalism. PRC was then in fear of an excessively patriotic urge of asserting a democratic and modernized China.

China's century-long ambivalence and negligence towards Hong Kong had in turn deprived Hong Kong of some "original tradition" from which a certain "Chinese" cultural root would have become identifiable. But equally nihilistic is the fact that Britain has never colonized Hong Kong

respectfully either by transplanting her cultural forms of life to or a long-term and developmental cultural policy in Hong Kong. Throughout the colonial period, Hong Kong has undergone a long process of transformation; out of this emerged an international free-port carrying in exchange huge ideological differences which distinguish it from what one is likely to get on the Chinese mainland in terms of political, economic and social practices. As a legacy of Hong Kong being shaped into one of the metropolitan centers of the world, cultural heterogeneity is nurtured here in the everyday life practices of its people. Over the years, Hong Kong people's ambivalent recognition of their being "Chinese" has had some culturally decentering impact on the colonized subjects as a whole, though most of them belong to families of immigrants from the mainland who settled under British rule in the early days of her colonial administration. Granted that this has not led to the formation of some kind of British subject identity either, for the colonizer has been 'cautious' enough not to allow her colonized subjects to assume British subject identities through tight control over both the cultural and political processes of identity formation. Instead of cultivating loyalty towards Her majesty, the coloinzer would rather rule by political distantiation.

As a result, both the Chinese and the British become the cultural "other" of the Hong Kong people. In turn, one might argue that to investigate the cultural identity of Hong Kong is to look at the cultural difference between "self" and her cultural "others": namely China and Britain. And thereby discourses on Hong Kong's cultural identity should be articulated in terms of the negotiations between identity and difference as mediated through the colonial history.

Different stages in colonial history determine different stages in the formation of cultural identities, through which we gather a sense of the "people" formed under various interactive relationships between the colonized and the colonizer.

The idealized picture of Hong Kong as a "cross-cultural free-port", the "Pearl of the Orient", "the center where east meets west", "a colony which enjoys the most political and cultural freedom", etc. has been often depicted by the colonial government. The official representation of Hong Kong identity as such, however, falls short of representative power, for it has overemphasized the role of administration and the use of what King calls "administrative absorption of politics"¹ to outline an image

¹ The administrative absorption of politics states that politics is turned into administrative problems as suggested in Ambrose. King, "Administrative Absorption of Politics in Hong Kong: Emphasis on the Grass Roots Level", *Asian Survey* 15:5 (1975).

of a prosperous Hong Kong identity, whilst such an obsession does not provide justifiable explanation for the apolitical attitude shared in popular identification.² Moreover, the "social accommodation of politics", an alternative perspective suggested by Lau and Ho, assumes that there are "resources networks" in our society to house the needs of people from the lower strata that naturally allows for public grievances, hence preventing political demands.³ Thereby, the linear perspective of the government to portray Hong Kong identity has never been adequate in responding to public needs. Official representation as an attempt to enact Hong Kong cultural image or identity inevitably produces little but distasteful political clichés.

For cultural identity is never adequately projected from the narrow angle of the hegemonic authority. To understand a community like Hong Kong, it is important to penetrate into the interfaced layers of cultural formation, which map the many socio-cultural positions within a community. The process of identification is best seen through the cultural activities and desires of the people. It is the process of the people actively engaged in the making-

² This view is depicted by Lau Siu-kai and Ho Kam-fai in "Social Accommodation of Politics: the Case of the Young Hong Kong Workers", *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics* 20:2 (1982), 172-88.

³ Lau and Ho, 175.

use of cultural resources; it is the opening up of popular spaces for the articulation of cultural identity *of their own*. Such formation of cultural identity is, inevitably, always a process of cultural politics in which different voices of the people are constantly re-aligning their positions vis-a-vis the hegemonic colonial authority.

In this play of difference the spaces opened with and voices articulated constitute indeed the desired *home* for the people -- a place soon to be turned into a space for lived experience in the dynamic process of popular cultural identification. What they lack is, however, not just a home but a *homely* home which provides not merely a shelter, be it political, economical, social or otherwise; but a psychologically identifiable place where they can "sleep well at night."⁴ The gist of cultural identity of Hong Kong is that the people are not homeless. Rather, they have too many given "homes" (Britain, China and Hong Kong), which eventually lead them astray and make them lose their way of self-recognition, self-identification and self-determination. To be *unhomed* is different from being homeless. Homi Bhabha remarks that the unhomely resides in the shock of recognition of the world-in-the-home, the home-in-the-world, that the home does not remain the

⁴ A phrase employed by Stuart Hall in "Old and New Identities" in *Culture, Globalization & The World-System*. ed. Anthony King (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991), p.43.

domain of domestic life, nor does the world simply become its social or historical counterpart.⁵ A homely home is thus the displacement of the border between the home and the world, and the fusion of the two; hence, the process of the formation of cultural identity is a process of home-making of the people.

The best place for home-making is surely popular culture where people can enact spaces for a homely identification, because it offers the most fluid place for the negotiation of space in the play of difference. On the one hand, it is the place of culture industry, a domain very much neglected by the official colonial representation of cultural identity. On the other, it occupies the very cultural space in which the people's mode of life is constantly being shaped. In the course of its consumption, it is in turn moulded by people's active uses, albeit in their capacity as consumers. In short, cultural identity is not constituted according to some absolute principles, but through the dynamic process of negotiation initiated in the realm of the popular.

The dynamic and fluid nature of the space of popular culture is not recognized by the early colonial rule. Before the late 60's when mass media started to grow, neither the

⁵ See Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994).

government nor the people had the urge for invoking any cultural identity. At the time, the colonial government adopted an off-hand strategy in denying its cultural-political responsibilities. This results in the ambiguity of the colonial policy in implanting an explicit cultural policy unto and during that period in British rule over Hong Kong. Cultural activities among the population were relatively simple then; the urge for either identification or differentiation was small. If the 50's represented the decade of immigration when refugees fled the Communist China, the 60's was the time for western influences to significantly transform Hong Kong society especially in the area of media culture. Western rock music, for example, dominated the air time of the equally popular entertainment of radio and television with the first wireless television broadcast company, TVB, opened in 1967.

In short, the development of media culture in Hong Kong from the 60's onwards facilitated the growing demands for and increasing varieties of popular culture. This opens up new social experiences as well as cultural spaces for the local settlements who were now ready to commit themselves to building a society of their own in the place they called home. And after the 1967 social riot, both the government and the people started to negotiate in terms of their respective socio-political positions as regards

identity and difference. Addressing the people through a set of cultural semiotics (the relationships among cultural signs, meanings, significations, etc.) based on practices of everyday life, popular culture helped generate popular power vis-a-vis institutional power.

Cultural productions, cultural signs and cultural interpretations are crucial factors in expanding the cultural spaces for popular power, for they can shift and exchange roles during the complex process of identity formation. The growing popularity of media culture did not succeed in securing the ultimate root of a community, but serve to transmit *images* through the simulacra of selected tradition and history. It had the quality to unearth the heteroglossic voices embedded within a cultural context, especially those coming from the *ordinary* people at large. Now we know that the concept of people is not given as a homogenous or class-determined slice of society. It is rather to be taken as a *multiaccentual* form of identification. In my argument, this formation of cultural identity of Hong Kong people is constructed through a cultural text like Sam Hui, for he partakes in the process of the cultural formation spanning the period from the late 60's to the early 90's. As a mythical figure in cultural identification, he is himself a cultural producer who actively constitutes a lot in the cultural industry like the production of TV shows, musical

albums, concerts, etc. No doubt, he is himself a charming cultural sign, an image for cultural identification and interpretation, among the ordinary people who actively read into him cultural meanings and create via him cultural spaces for identification.

1.2 Articulating Sam Hui

Why Sam Hui? This is a two-fold question. First of all, why is he chosen as the object of study for investigating Hong Kong's cultural identity? And secondly, why could he successfully distinguish himself as the superstar of his time in the entertainment business?

"Sam was an all-round artist", remarked William Kwan, currently the Regional A&R Director of Polygram Records Ltd., in an interview with me. Kwan has been working as production director of Polygram for more than seventeen years. His recollection of the good old days working with Sam Hui shed light on the star qualities of Sam as a rich embodiment of all sorts of cultural resources. "He did the production work by himself. He wrote the songs and lyrics, and did the mixing and arrangements together with his former band partners. They improvised and

composed swiftly in the studio. And Sam didn't even need an image designer, unlike pop singers nowadays who might not even know how to read a musical script or differentiate one note from another. But Sam did all of these single-handedly. That's amazing! It is difficult to find talent like him today." Unquestionably unique historical background as well as personal talent account for his representative power in the formation of Hong Kong's cultural identity of his time.

Born on September 6, 1948, in Quangdong, Sam Hui was raised in a musical family. His father was a famous talent of traditional Chinese music, and his mother was a member of Chinese Opera . Together with three elder brothers and one younger sister, the Hui's moved to Hong Kong and settled in Diamond Hill in 1950, one year after the establishment of the People's Republic of China .

While still a student at the St. Francis Secondary School, Sam formed the first band of his own in 1964 called the Harmonicks Band, and began journeying as a performer. Later, the band was dismissed, and Sam joined the Bar Six, and finally the Lotus in 1966 when he was still an A-Level student at Yin Wah College. As major vocal of the band, he promptly won adorations from his peers, and "The Adoring Sam Hui Fan Club" was formed, with two little girls

Samuella (a name specially coined after Sam) Liu and Nancy Hau as chairpersons. Sam launched frequent performances in hotels, where he met his eventual Philippino wife Rebecca June Fleming.

In 1967, Sam officially started his singing career when he joined the first record company, the Diamond Record. And as the first wireless broadcasting station, was set up in the same year, Sam began to cross the boundary into various media forms, first television and later film. Sam was invited by TVB to host a youth programme, the "Star Show", marking a crucial watershed in his entertainment career.

With distinguished academic performance, he indiscreetly entered the most admirable hotbed for intellectuals -- the University of Hong Kong, where he majored in psychology, a trendy social science discipline. At this time he left the Lotus, and his old fan club was reorganized as "The Official Sam Hui Fan Club", with Jimmy Chan as chairman.

In 1970, another turning point in Sam's career took place when he signed contract with the Golden Harvest Film Company and shot the first film in his life. The next year he joined Polygram, a leading record company. With his

elderest brother Michael Hui, Sam co-hosted a popular weekly show "Blessings from the Twin Stars" (雙星報喜), in which Sam's first Canto-pop song "Spirit of the Iron Tower" (鐵塔凌雲) was first sung, sending the wave of Canto-pop songs to eventual popularity.

From the 70's onwards, Sam's fame accumulated as his popularity rose with his Canto-pop songs, lyrics, television shows, and films all underway and well-received by the public. His albums and films kept breaking box-office records. He held numerous concerts in various venues like the newly constructed City Hall (73-78), the Hong Kong Stadium (77,79,81) and later in the Elizabeth Stadium (82), and eventually the Hong Kong Coliseum (83,87,89,92). His songs were broadcast by the BBC and the English channel of Radio Hong Kong for the first time in Canto-pop song history (74-5). His fan club was internationalized in 1977 under the name of "The International Sam Hui Fan Club" co-chaired by Allan Ip and Angela Hau; and ten years later "The Universal Sam Hui Fan Club" was finally set up, running on committee base.

In November 1991, a year after the death of his father, and the subsequent traffic accident of his mother, Sam openly announced his decision to retire. In 1992 he launched a historical 41 farewell concerts at the Hong Kong

Coliseum, marking the end of his three-decade singing career in Hong Kong.⁶

Sam is the "devourer" of various arts and media forms -- including music, song lyrics, television (variety show, music video), radio, film, etc.. One might not be surprised to see cross-media artists in the entertainment scene today, but it was rare at the time when Sam, still a university student, stepped onto the performing stage wearing different faces to capture the majority of the local audience. His fans came from a wide range, spanning all ages, classes, sexes, educational and occupational backgrounds. Unlike other pop stars, Sam was no mere idol who succeeded only with special groups of fans either teenagers or adults. His predecessors, for example, only appeal to the adult working groups and his followers like Alan Tam (譚詠麟) allure mostly teenagers. But Sam's songs and films appeal to every rank of society and all walks of life. He is a social hero and symbol who addresses himself to the needs of the unhomely public at large in the era of media culture, when they found it appropriate to attach themselves to some forms of identity. No one in the history of Canto-pop song in Hong Kong has got

⁶ For the background history of Sam Hui, I rely largely on the special publication in memory of Sam Hui, *Love Sam '91 & '92*, published by the committee of The Universal Sam Hui Fan Club. For a detailed chronology of Sam Hui see the Appendix.

such all-encompassing power in speaking to the whole society, inviting the same breath for the divergent range of common people.

Sam Hui is himself a model of cultural history who has lived through a popular career spanning the last three decades of British colonial rule in Hong Kong. He is the living witness of the transformation of Hong Kong since the late 60's. He is a rich cultural text because on the one hand he stands for the typical elitist who received the typical colonial education. Yet on the other hand he has successfully equipped himself with a popular *voice* which opens up public spaces for enunciation by all walks of people, and especially the lower income group in society, hence providing a *home* for identification in the different phases of cultural transformation. His voice provides significant cultural space for the people in shaping their mode of life. It occupies a crucial role in the cultural process of identity formation, for it seems to have followed closely changes in the colonial history, be them political, social and economical. To investigate Sam Hui is therefore not only to unveil the reasons for his success, but, through him, to understand better why the people of Hong Kong need him in searching for their collective cultural identity.

In the following chapters, as a way of mediating Sam's history with the colonial history of Hong Kong in the process of cultural identification, I would look at how the cultural spaces opened up by Sam are used by different cultural users, and explicate how those spaces which position the cultural users in everyday life practices are generated in the formation of cultural identity. Finally I would like to suggest how the heteroglossic voices conveyed through Sam are embedded within the cultural context of his time through massive uses of his particular voice.

II Popular Culture And Cultural Identification

2.1 Colonial Policy and Media Culture

What sort of identity do the Hong Kong people need and want? The gap between the colonizer and the colonized is not wide enough to generate a nationalistic urge to call back the nostalgic self, if there is any. This has a great deal to do with the colonial policy adopted by Britain which targeted mainly at securing economic interests. Instead of cultural "mummification", or attempting to "civilize" the colonized subjects, the colonizer ironically "emancipates" by hypnotizing them, hence preventing them from searching for any local identity. This is mostly conducted through the adoption of laissez-faire policy. By maintaining Hong Kong as a free port, Britain has benefited the most through international trade. And with a gesture of saying "though we colonize you, we let you preserve your culture", a sense of freedom is thus constituted to discourage the colonized subjects from conjuring up strong anti-colonial sentiment. In other words, the focus on economic policy "frees" the colonizer from granting long-term subject rights and developing far-sighted policy for the general welfare of the community; it simultaneously "frees" the colonized from

being politically and culturally subjugated -- a very special kind of freedom which one might feel contented to say "I have parents but I am freed from domestic control". As a result, this "mutual freedom" policy links the colonizer and the colonized together in unique colonial relationship typical of Hong Kong.

The colonizer is recognized by the colonized partly for the "freedom" enjoyed by the latter, and partly for their fear of Communist China, especially when many of them were immigrants who fled China in the 50's. It is thus unfruitful to draw on nationalist discourse in the formation of cultural identity in Hong Kong. Yet such a recognition cannot guarantee total satisfaction among the colonized. The lack of social welfare benefits, poor working conditions and the high rate of unemployment in the 50's and 60's had inevitably resulted in anti-government feelings, which eventually led to the outburst of social riot in 1967. The riot invoked by workers resulting in the enforcement of curfew was a clear indication of the people's desire to defy the British sovereignty, a colonial detour that marked, in Scott's view, the end of the unreformed colonial state⁷. But soon, the anti-government sentiments were pacified by the change in cultural policy as well as the rapid development of media culture. This marked a watershed in the formation

⁷ See Ian Scott, *Political Change and the Crisis of Legitimacy in Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1989).

of cultural identity in Hong Kong. Significantly, then, there diverged two streams of cultural identities since the early 70's: one was the official representation of Hong Kong cultural image by the government in administering a cross-cultural 'look' for Hong Kong; the other was the popular construct of cultural spaces which came with the rise of local consciousness in the process of people making use of the media culture.

The 70's was the time when Hong Kong entered an era of economic development and social improvement. The immigrants now felt more contented after the government had introduced a series of administrative reforms and social welfare campaigns; meanwhile, the new generation emerged in an age of relative prosperity, with more job opportunities, public housing etc. This was the first time in the colonial history when the government assumed her sovereign role as colonizer in representing for the metropolitan city a "Hong Kong Culture", mostly in the good name of the "east meets west". The 70's was also the era when popular culture was rapidly growing alongside developments in advanced tele-technology. This manifested the power of the media in providing a sense of "imagined community" ⁸, as a source for cultural identification. And

⁸ See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 2nd ed. (New York & London: Verso, 1991).

the space for that imagination was found in popular images like movie stars, popular singers, cartoon figures, etc. The process of identification was the desire of the self to identify with an image, a *desire for* an other. The "other" of course refers neither to the colonizer nor the Chinese but a home, a *local consciousness* that the self could be tied down to.

The sense of local consciousness began to develop in the 70's largely because pro-communist political urge was enhanced among the people though they were sometimes confined to the elitists. With the general rise of living standard, a growing need for entertainment and the impending demand for a homely feel, media culture and popular images became key spaces for the formation of cultural identity within the community of Hong Kong. Popular images were thus found to be the best site for identity habitat.

After the fall of the Gang of Four which marked the end of the Cultural Revolution in 1976, the war of ideological political stands swept the fresh minds of the intellectual youths, who were searching for, or identifying with deep cultural-national roots, and were thus torn between the two opposing tides of capitalism and Marxism. The promising open door policy adopted by Deng Xiaoping

after the death of Mao Zedong in 1976 did ring occasional bells for some local intellectuals to assert a stronger Chinese identity within political discourse in Hong Kong. Yet such an assertion for Chinese identity was limited to the political terrain, and especially to the potential elitists of the community. The most vigorous public resistant movements that sparked not from the common mass, but from the social idealists, i.e. the local students who *learned* the nationalistic sentiments from their study of history; and local intellectuals who might have retained Chinese experience from their own past.

Explicit assertion as such was hardly an indication of collective consciousness among the general public who perceived the Cultural Revolution as more a social unrest than a war of ideology. They wanted to 'settle down' since they had by now grown roots in Hong Kong and participated actively in building up the local economy and community. And their next generation -- the locally born "Hongkongese" -- were now reaching their teenage years. They needed a social space for shaping a sense of belonging in this homeland of theirs. Unlike their parents, they had no nostalgic memory of the mainland experience. The formation of cultural memory came directly from everyday life which was beginning to be imbued with media images. As a result, instead of fighting for the identification

through political idealism, they would rather seek identifiable images of popular desire in the media culture.

2.2 Sam Hui as Desired Cultural Image

Sam's emergence surely came with apt timing. Migrated to Hong Kong soon after his birth in China, Sam spent his childhood years like many of his peers at the time: having received traditional Chinese language and literature as primary language, he adopted English as the second language through the regional primary school, before entering Anglo-Chinese secondary schools (St. Francis Secondary School and Yin Wah College) where he encountered vigorous colonial cultural shock. Secondary schools in the 50's and 60's were usually run by missionaries such as the Anglican and the Roman Catholics. This was a typical sign of the colonial government's educational policy, indicating that it had no intention to culturally colonize Hong Kong and would rather rule by the 'mutual freedom' policy as analysed above.

As Sam developed his career in popular culture in his maturing age, he soon became the public's desired and

identifiable image for several reasons. Firstly he shared with the public the same historical and cultural milieu. With them, he witnessed the historical and economical transformation of Hong Kong, and created an ideal cultural image that delivered a sense of homeliness. Since he was sensitive enough to cater for desires coming from the different walks of life, social roles and political stands in his popular works (especially songs and films), he gave the people an impression that he understood them by voicing for their social plights, that having grown up in a cross-cultural environment he nonetheless could not ignore the older generation which made up the majority of the population. Indeed, one might argue that he helped construct the identity of a unique new Hong Kong-born generation by giving them a *voice*. As one of them, he was all equipped to sparkle local consciousness which developed eventually into a search of unique cultural identity awaiting to take shape in his time.

Secondly, Sam was the 'other' image for cultural identification of the people. What the people desired for was an image that both resembled their own and appeared to be better than their own. Such a desire for identity was thus a *dialectical* one -- it was simultaneously *being* an identity and *becoming* another. Sam's class background fit well into this dialectical desire of the people for cultural

image. On the one hand he adopted the same voice of the people, offering an impression that he *was* one of them and could therefore represent them. As an example, the very first line in his first person narrative song "Mr. Boo: Private Eyes" (半斤八兩) reads "We are the working people ..." (我哋呢班打工仔). Sam embodied something which the common people at that time could not afford and attain: higher education, for University students were generally identified with impalpable profundity in thought and elitist status in society. They were the privileged group who would eventually occupy important government posts, play crucial roles in public policy making, and affect directly the general welfare and well-being of society. In short, Sam might be envisaged as a symbol of power, an elitist who would speak in the name of the public, whose voice was all they needed, for what they lacked -- or so it seemed -- was the possibility and power to have a voice in society. A popular singer coming from their same class would mean listening to the some sort of 'self' singing in the public arena. Sam, in this way, has effectively provided them with the 'other' for identification.

Thirdly, Sam's body image served as a site both of resistance and identification. The body is the site to exercise the discipline of meanings and behaviours, and

eventually power⁹. With fluent command of English and Cantonese, Sam was the perfect embodiment of an elitist, bourgeois figure: tall, thin, baby-faced, soft voiced, and well-mannered. Elegant image and gentle smile as such should have been the best site for the nourishment and realization of middle-class ideology. However, Sam deviated from the expected political and social norms to defy the possible bodily control by putting himself "out of place", beyond the pale. He extended in his works a grassroot touch to strike the cord of the popular and echoed the voice of the people. He spoke through his songs to address directly the popular concerns with social topics and livelihood issues. In the ebbs of growing grievance and unrest during the late 60's, class conflicts were critical and imminent. Sam defiantly presented to the public a middle-class body with a "low" popular taste. Dressed up as a clown and acting like a fool in the comic show "Blessings from the Twin Stars", and singing on stage like an ordinary amateur singer with a voice totally unremarkable, Sam's gesture was so ordinary that it invited, undoubtedly and surprisingly, full-range popular identification. When he was at the beginning of his career in

⁹ See Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish/The Birth of Prison*. (London: Penguin, 1977); and *Power/Knowledge*. Colin Gordon, ed. (New York: Pantheon, 1980).; Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven F. Rendall. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), p. 142; and John Fiske, *Understanding Popular Culture* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989), pp 90-102.

the 70's, he was blessed with the ideal time for the growth of the entertainment industry based on the local economy. With rapid development of the media, especially radio and television, his body was, as it were, converted into a cultural site where the realization of a symbolic code had already been promised by a simulacrum¹⁰ ready to come to life. He kept on reminding the public that he was no opera artist, no aesthetics, or simply no art at all working under a 'culture' hegemony set up by the colonizer. What he presented was pop shows that were close to the people's daily needs. A new age of popular culture had come with a rising consciousness of local identity, which exorcized the nostalgic trace of the "original" Chinese identity which might be treasured by the older generation.

Fourthly, Sam helps bridge the gap between two generations. With the expansion of media culture (radio, television, print, film, etc.) and the establishment of cultural venues such as the City Hall in the early 70's, a new form of social practices came into place such as concert-going, film and television viewing. These might be natural practices for society. Yet Sam made popular culture not just a social practice but a *family practice*, calling for two generations' participation together in the cultural space he helped create. They attended Sam's functions

¹⁰ See Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations* (New York: Semiotext(c), 1983).

together! Sam strengthened for them a sense of the family habitus, shaping for many a domestic sentiment of belonging to Hong Kong.

Fifthly, by embracing a broad range of social positions, Sam provides a *home* for the general *unhomely* people, for whom Hong Kong is unhomely because nowhere can they anchor their ambivalent subjectivity. One way to house the people is to produce for them a desirable voice that gives the impression that it is "of the people, for the people, and with the people". In this respect, the use of mass media by Sam is most accommodating, and hence powerful, for his usage of the popular cultural form is executed with full attention to the people. Sam's Canto-pop songs can basically be divided into 5 categories: songs of romance, social issues¹¹, popular trends, life orientations¹² and Hong Kong identity¹³. The target audience are lovers, the jobless¹⁴, gamblers¹⁵, yes people¹⁶, opportunists¹⁷,

¹¹ e.g. "Inflation Tide" (加價熱潮); "Squattered Area" (木屋區); "Water Ration" (割水歌), etc.

¹² e.g. "The Song of the Prodigal" (浪子心聲); "Life As Chess-playing" (世事如棋), etc.

¹³ e.g. "Bauhinia" (洋紫荊); "Farewell Hong Kong" (再會香港); "Despite '97" (話知你九七), etc.

¹⁴ e.g. "Searching for a Job" (搵嘢做)

¹⁵ e.g. "Don't Treat Me as a Fool" (咪當我老襯); "The Story of Mahjong Hero" (打雀英雄傳); "Enjoy Mahjong" (麻雀要樂), etc.

¹⁶ e.g. "It's better to Compromise" (做人要識Do)

¹⁷ e.g. "Shoe-polisher" (擦鞋仔)

band players¹⁸, fans, wealth dreamers, students¹⁹, youngsters, emigrants, and the general Hong Kong people. As regards the content of the lyrics, hit topics include water ration, mahjong playing, inflation, filial piety, genius and the idiot, squattered areas, emigration and 1997, love for Hong Kong sentiment, etc. The all-embracing strategy used by Sam helps erect his own popularity and secure a popular market. It also effectively creates a space, indeed, a home for the people by providing them with a heterogenous voice.

People experience a new form of homely sentiment in the sharing of the same air time (of radio, TV, etc) and space (of film in the cinema, etc) -- an indication of the displacement of the border between home and community, and the fusion of the two. Furthermore, the media thus have now become a space, a home wherein the social and class differences are, instead of demolished, *retained* and frozen temporarily as long as the air time is still there, making people feel 'at home' with their social role and class allegiances.

¹⁸ e.g. "Trend of Band-playing" (潮流興夾BAND)

¹⁹ e.g. "School Boys" (學生歌)

2.3 Politics of (In)Difference since the 80's

People had constructed desirable cultural spaces through their identification with Sam Hui's image in the media culture in the 70's. A sense of local consciousness with the endearing homely feel was thus triggered off and became impending in the 80's when political negotiations between Britain and China began to crystalize over the 1997 issue. Hong Kong people, other than positing themselves through the media culture, were becoming more conscious of their identity in terms of politics. Political identifications relied on the play of power among political groups and the general public in ensuring that their voice of the "other" was different from either authority -- the colonizer Britain or the 'motherland' China. Hence, to posit themselves socially requires the manoeuvring of a politics of difference. The rise of local consciousness and the urge to articulate local identity become impending.

In the 90's, especially after the passing of the Basic Law, various pressure and political groups were established²⁰, creating tensions and discourse of

²⁰Various political or pressure groups were formed in the 90's especially concerned with the Sino-British negotiation, and the drafting of the Basic Law. Examples are United Democrats of Hong Kong (1990); Democratic Alliance for Betterment of Hong Kong (1992); and the Liberal Democratic Federation (1993), etc.

differences through their activities. Though various groups have mobilized themselves in opening up public spaces for the articulation of different ideological discourses, the majority of the common people generally exhibit cynical and indifferent attitudes towards such moves which constitute the unique Hong Kong temperament today. For instance, the political parties serve largely as expressive "paggers" of the people -- the most common communicative means largely and neurotically used by many Hong Kong people. Instead of attempting to build up a political structure composed of different voices speaking from different ideological stands, the political parties serve to vent social discontent, or causal political fear especially against the Chinese Communist temperament. They are uninterested in identifying with either the Chinese and the British government, and equally uninterested in subverting the two. Fluid forms of identifications are currently exhibited according to the contingent change of political climate.

For the general public, they became "patriotic Chinese" as they watched the Olympic games, expressed sympathy of kinship in the '91 East China Flood, and supported the schoolless mainland children in the "Hope Project". But, such an affectionate form of identification shifts when the political milieu is considered unfavourable

Similarly, the readiness of the people to march and demonstrate does not necessarily entail a strong sense of patriotic sentiment in the summer of 1989. Like most shopping mall strollers and consumers, Hong Kong people like to try new consumer goods amid the mechanical monotony of their daily life. The political scene in the 80's has in turn become a fashion for entertainment or psychological relaxation after the signing of Sino-British Joint Declaration in 1984. Hence the whole industry of political consumption emerged, facilitating the formation and production of Hong Kong images heavy in political flavour. Political elements now abound in popular films, songs, TV shows, advertisements, or magazines usually in a form of parodies, cliches or puns only to call forth some kind of catharsis rather than to arouse consciousness. They become a new cultural code so much enjoyed in the entertainment culture. Ironically, advocates of the "We Love Hong Kong, We build Hong Kong" slogan have all, sooner or later, become American, British, Canadian or Australian Hong Kong Devotees! (Think of popular stars as Dodo Cheng (鄭裕玲); or liberal politicians such as Martin Lee (李柱銘), Emily Lau (劉慧卿) etc.). The game is clear: buy a foreign residency before you play the Love-Hong-Kong game. Just so if you lose the game, you could forget Hong Kong, and start afresh in the way you play the pin-ball machine. In

the land where the lack of commitment, nationality, history and authenticity are fully experienced, everybody is dissatisfied but *HAPPY*! Perhaps Baudrillard should consider Hong Kong as another utopia achieved in the age of postmodernity²¹. A guarantee of the retainment of "horse-racing and dancing" as the fundamental reassuring force to maintain "prosperity and stability" in Hong Kong only serves to reassure the ideology of "culture" in terms of either high arts or recreation. This orientation towards popular cultural experience is explicitly encouraged and implemented in the structure of cultural policy.

The government and the people have attempted to build up a Hong Kong cultural identity in very different ways. The government body taking care of the cultural affairs is the Recreation and Culture Branch. Emphasis has been put on "recreation", which aims to appeal to the people and eventually displace and detain the anti-colonial sentiments, as well as the fear of communism, with an intention to enhance a general attitude of political indifference via the complacency of cultural populism. However, the construction of 'culture' by the government does not merge with the culture industry well which is dominated powerfully by mass media and it covers the majority of cultural activities and desires. The possibility

²¹ For the notion of utopia achieved see Jean Baudrillard, *America* (London: Verso, 1988).

of opening up diversifying cultural spaces for and of the people by the government representation of culture is very low. Popular culture has no place in the conception of building up a Hong Kong cultural identity in the agenda of cultural policy. Here lies a discrepancy over the way culture is articulated between the government and the community.

Culture, to the Hong Kong government, even with emphasis on recreation, is a label for high arts like orchestra, ballet, drama, etc.; whereas the popular cultural spaces are taken over by the mass media -- TV, film, radio, etc. Though the Television Ordinance was passed in 1964, the decision was based on commercial consideration rather than to help construct a culture based on the popular in Hong Kong. The indifferent attitude of the government towards popular culture is seen also through the policy of control and supervision over the media. For instance there are the Film Ordinance and institutions like TELA which serve only to discipline and regulate popular cultural expression. Nonetheless, from the 80's onwards the entertainment sector has imprinted their image in the people's mind, that they can help mobilize the mass in campaigns like fund-raising singing concerts to help the victims of natural disasters in the Guangdong Province. This reflects a very ambiguous cultural identity as created by the people. On the one hand they refer to the mainland

victims as 'brothers and sisters' (同胞), but the national sentiment is actually constituted in the gesture of being *different* from them. The psychology is: Hong Kong people are superior and wealthy enough to *pay for the identity difference*. This very gesture actually allows them to distinguish themselves from the mainland Chinese. When compared with the government, the cultural industry thereby can provide more cultural spaces to cluster the intriguing cultural sentiments among the people in the process of cultural identification.

In the politically unstable period of the 80's, Sam's image began to change correspondingly. The general rise of living standard altered not only the form of life of the people but also their cultural taste. The growing varieties of popular choice broke the monopoly of Sam in the popular music industry. Strategic production of popular singers began to dominate the cultural scene. Singing competitions organised by various media channels (like the New Star singing competition organised by TVB, Idol of the Future singing competition by Rediffusion (RTV), Amateur singing contest of the 19 Districts by Radio Television Hong Kong, etc.) serve as the hotbed for the birth of new stars. The sharpest example was Anita Mui (梅艷芳), the winner of the first New Star singing competition. A new age which emphasized image and packaging of the singers soon

replaced the former age of singer-song writers like Sam, or superstar singers with nightingale's voice like Roman Tam (羅文) and Paula Tsui (徐小鳳). Though, Sam still rendered a very respectful status. Moving into the 80's, the entertainment industry had developed significantly. New strategies had been adopted by TV, film and record companies. New idols were produced via singing competitions or billboard awards. Superstars like Anita Mui, Alan Tam, Leslie Cheung (張國榮), Danny Chan (陳百強) began to influence the music industry. Sam still played an important role because he still breathed with the historical changes of Hong Kong. He repackaged himself by joining another record company in 1983 which refashioned him with a deliberate, sophisticated image, very different from his hitherto casual and playful image. The more the images/identities are disposable, the more their demand is created. After the signing of Sino-British Joint Declaration in 1984 which re-affirmed the 1997 deadline, Hong Kong people responded by a growing indifferent attitude towards their political future. Sam then joined another record company and released the "A New Beginning" (新的開始) album. And in the rejuvenated years of bands in mid-80's, he conquered the billboard with the song "Trend of Band-playing" (潮流興夾Band). Furthermore, after the June Fourth Incident in 1989 when confidence towards "one-country two systems" dropped to its lowest point, an urge for local

cultural identity was hastened and Sam in 1990 released his last album "Hong Kong Sentiment 1990" (香港情懷90), and announced thereafter his retirement. Of course, his ambivalent attitude of staying or leaving after his early retirement remains an enigma to most of his fans. We see then that the themes of his songs shifted from direct address to social issues and habits to an extreme proliferation of clichés, with a light pun on the uncertain political future of the Hong Kong people²². The cultural space which Sam helps create thus becomes a new code for entertainment or psychological relaxation, and therefore indifferent, rather than sincere political consciousness.

²² e.g. like "Japanese Doll" (日本娃娃); "To Make Friend with Her" (跟她做個 friend), etc.

III Sam Hui In Use

In the formation of Hong Kong's cultural identity, apart from the official representation, a significant role is played by the public use of cultural resources in forming cultural spaces. Basically there are two kinds of cultural users who draw on cultural sign like Sam as a way to expanding their cultural spaces. One comes from the media, the other comes directly from the people. As mentioned before, the late 60's and the 70's witnessed the rapid rise of the media culture which from the mid-80's onwards invited active uses of cultural resources by the people in shaping their own cultural spaces. However, due to unstable political factors, the act of cultural uses becomes a way to securing a sense of indifference. In this chapter I would investigate the different uses of Sam Hui by the cultural users in different historical phases, and study how the semiotics of conducting and circulating the cultural meanings of Sam as a cultural text/ resource in the practices of everyday life changes with the development in the media industry in the late 60's and 70's. Also, I would examine the way negotiation of cultural spaces changes in the play of difference when the political milieu changes in the 80's.

3.1 Formation of Popular Spaces through Media

The 60's was the era of media culture in Hong Kong. Media, including radio, TV, press, film, etc. became the entrance to everyday life practices of the people, both during and after work. For example, radio was turned on in factories, "tea restaurants" (茶餐廳), and at home, etc., which were the major spaces for social and cultural identification of the public. At the same time western rock music (e.g. The Beatles) and Mandarin songs-of-the-age (國語時代曲) from Taiwan were widely broadcast. But these imported popular culture did not help in building up a sense of local consciousness. Rather, they separated the two generations: the younger generation was more prone to listening to western rock 'n roll; while the older generation remained more familiar with the Mandarin tongue. In any case, the historical background and cultural upbringings of the two generations had not provided them with a homely feel for the same cultural identification. Not until the appearance of Sam Hui and the uses made of him did the radio eventually succeed in creating an influential unifying force embracing the public as a whole and providing for them a common popular cultural space. By capitalizing on Sam's qualities, the local radio succeeded in bridging the gap between the two generations and providing them with the

most popular space for cultural identification, a home where the use of Sam as cultural sign are put in their hands.

The immediate 'usurpation' of air time by Sam soon opened up another cultural space, i.e. a local consciousness began to take shape in the music industry in Hong Kong. Sam was all along a band player. He first got his fame through putting on a western rock 'n roll look. But in 1971, Sam attempted to sing a Cantonese song "Spirit of Iron Tower" (鐵塔凌雲) in his comedian show at TVB which swiftly captured the people. The record producer of Sam at that time was Ricky Fung, who took the opportunity to start promoting Canto-pop songs. Thereafter a new page was turned in the music industry, with Canto-pop songs taking the leading role. This helped a lot in constituting a recognition of local identity among the people who formerly felt unhomely in Hong Kong. Local music thus became a good site for investment. After the miraculous success of Sam in initiating the wave of Canto-pop songs, producers of popular music started to concentrate on local artists and sign contract with local singers. The radio and music industry began to use Sam Hui as a sign from cultural resources to build up cultural spaces for popular identification which in turn helped allow the public to nurture a local consciousness, and found themselves at home.

All at once, Sam Hui became a cultural hero widely used by all forms of media. For instance the press played an important role in using Sam to accommodate the public. The popularity of Canto-pop songs indirectly brought forth a number of musical magazines and musical columns in the local Chinese press, including *Chinese Student Weekly* (中國學生周報) and *Hong Kong Youth Weekly* (香港青年周報) in the 60's; *Youth weekly* (年青人周報) founded in 1973 and *Music and You* (音樂多你). In late 70's we had *Music Weekly* (音樂 - 周), and in the 80's there were many publication on music, including *Singers and Song* (歌星與歌); *Disc Jockey Weekly* (唱片騎師周報), etc.. And the print media began to open columns for introducing local music. They included key local press like *Ming Pao* (明報), *Sing Pao* (成報), *Sing Tao Daily/Evening* (星島日/晚報), *Hong Kong Economic Journal* (信報); and magazines such as *Pai Shing Monthly* (百姓A刊), *Breakthrough* (突破), etc.²³ All began to establish coverage on Sam. Consequently local popular songs, especially Canto-pop songs swiftly got mass appeal by focusing on the common cultural figure: Sam Hui.

Besides radio and the press, other media like TV and film also started to address issues of local identification. The "Star Show" featuring Sam as the host, and later

²³ See Wong Chi-wah, *Hong Kong Canto-pop Songs in 40 Years* (Hong Kong: Joint Publishing), pp. 107-9.

"Blessings from the Twin Stars" (雙星報喜) became part of the public's everyday life. These TV programmes became hot topic of the city, and the weekly longing of the people. Similarly, the film industry entered a new era in the 70's when, in collaboration with his brother Michael Hui, Sam produced and acted in a series of comic films which dealt with conventional social life of the ordinary people, such as "Mr. Boo: Private Eyes" (半斤八兩); "Crazy for Money" (發錢寒); "The Contract" (賣身契), etc. His films became again another major site or people's leisure. And paramount of all, it has become a family 'event'.

Sam was everywhere. He had virtually become home for the Hong Kong people. Whenever he had a new film on show, the title songs would automatically be broadcast 20 to 30 times a day on radio. Free movie and concert tickets or the newly released album of Sam would be given via radio game programmes, or through lucky draws organized by the press. Soon the wide-ranging uses of Sam turned him into a local popular hero, and that unique symbol became the space where the cultural identity of the Hong Kong people was formed. In contrast to the high brow construction of cultural representation in terms of arts by the government, the formation of cultural identity of the people comes directly and widely from popular culture via the growing

popularity of the media. The fact that Sam becomes the uniquely desired and identifiable image of the public can be attributed partly to his very extraordinary qualities: background, education, body, etc. (see chapter II); and partly to the popular music industry in Hong Kong at that time. Sam took the dominating role in the popular industry and got massive exposure in the media because there was no other better choice equally powerful and enchanting to earn public appeal. The lack of Canto-pop songs composers and lyric writers was one of the key reasons why Sam remained for at least a decade the only famous singer-song writer in Hong Kong. Local music productions were rare, except for the making of the title songs of TV soap opera, of which the singers were not composers. Examples are: Roman Tam (羅文), Lisa Wong (汪明荃), Yan Lei (甄妮), Michael Kwan (關正傑), etc.. It was not until the 80's when popular songs singing contests and the "Top Ten Golden Chinese Songs Award" presented by RTHK began to change again the music industry, and when the massive uses of Sam Hui by the media began to be 'decentralized'.

3.2 Tactics of the People

The people, besides being passive receivers of what the cultural industry provides through the media, are often also active cultural users who play an indispensable role in the constitution of the Hong Kong cultural identity through their own everyday life practices. The space that allows for active participation and daily life consumption is popular culture. The nature of popular culture is two-fold. As part of the cultural industry, it constitutes the habitual forms of life of the community, and hence inevitably hinders the space for creativity of the individuals. But at the same time it is also a product made with active participation and demand by the people. It appeals to the mass through a set of cultural semiotics that organizes in the everyday life practices.

In the 70's since people had to turn to the media (popular culture) to search for a homely identifiable cultural image, the media industry was functional in manipulating the cultural taste of the people. Due to the lack of competition, Sam Hui became the dominant cultural image of desire. As a result, the strategy of the media industry to enhance a Sam Hui Hit had successfully constructed the popular memory. From this we see the

paradox of popular culture in everyday life. On the one hand no matter how close its relationship was with the people, it is after all the product of the cultural industry. The ultimate goal is profit-making, glorifying the exchange value of the people rather than their use value in the Marxist view, and erecting an iron cage to discipline popular desires and the forms of life. On the other hand, the people under manipulation can in turn actively respond to the given cultural resources and constructs by tactically making use of them to form cultural spaces of their own. In de Certeau's distinction there is significant difference between *strategy* and *tactic*:

What distinguishes them at the same time concerns the *types of operations* and the role of spaces: strategies are able to produce, tabulate, and impose these spaces, when those operations take place, whereas tactics can only use, manipulate, and divert these spaces...

Thus a North African living in Paris or Ronboix ... creates for himself a space in which he can find *ways of using* the constraining order of the place or of the language. Without leaving the place where he has no choice but to live and which lays down its law for him, he establishes within it a degree of *plurality* and creativity. By an art of

being in between, he draws unexpected results from his situation.²⁴

It is clear that what de Certeau highlights here is the space of creativity of the people in the *use* of what they are given, and turn them into "the lexicon of users' practices"²⁵:

Thus, once the images broadcast by television and the time spent in front of the TV set have been analyzed, it remains to be asked what the consumer *makes* of these images and during these hours.²⁶

The popular culture in the 70's and 80's was dominated by Sam's voice. Though market strategies are employed by the culture industry, the choice to incorporate Sam into their everyday life means that they have actively participated in the production of a cultural image, Sam, through public demand of him. Since Sam was able to embrace every walk of life in society through his songs, different meanings were suggested by him to different social groupings. A "degree of plurality and creativity" is involved when the different social groups circulate what Sam means to them. There are tactics with which people can act and react when thrown into "the place where [they

²⁴ de Certeau, 30.

²⁵ de Certeau, 31.

²⁶ de Certeau, 31.

have] no choice but to live and which lays down its law for [them]". There is no linear production-consumption relationship between the cultural industry and the people. The fans of Sam buy photos or posters of their idol, yet still they can sell them at higher price to other fans at times when the desired commodities are in shortage. Similarly, they can buy Sam's album and listen to his voice, or they can replace Sam's voice by their voice when they absorb themselves in the performance at karaoke.

The importance of the Sam Hui phenomenon lies not in how long, how often and how eager the people listen to his songs, watch his comedian shows and films, but how the meanings of Sam's work are circulated among them before, during and after his appearance. Fiske echoes de Certeau by saying that "the art of the people is the art of "making do", and that "The culture of everyday life lies in the creative, discriminating use of the resources that capitalism provides."²⁷ Taking an obvious stand against the pessimistic Frankfurt School cultural thinkers, Fiske affirms the creative use of the people, claiming that they are not one-dimensional. Even the very act of cultural consumption is not unilateral in the active process of cultural economy:

²⁷ Fiske, 28.

Popular culture is not consumption, it is culture -- the active process of generating and circulating meanings and pleasures within a social system: culture, however industrialized, can never be adequately described in terms of the buying and selling of commodities.²⁸

In Fiske's view, cultural industry belongs to the cultural economy (as oppose to the financial) which circulates meanings and pleasures.²⁹ Cultural commodities, be them goods or images, are all *cultural texts*, and they provide

discursive structure of potential meanings and pleasures that constitutes a major resource of popular culture. In this economy there are no consumers, only circulators of meanings, for meanings are the only elements in the process that can be neither commodified nor consumed: meanings can be produced, reproduced, and circulated only in that constant process that we call culture.³⁰

²⁸ Fiske, 23.

²⁹ Fiske, 26.

³⁰ Fiske, 27.

The meanings and pleasures derived from Sam can be found in many tactical forms. Common recipients can either actively or passively infuse him into their everyday life habits via the very act of hailing his poster on their wall, dubbing his songs into private compilations, talking about Sam's comedian TV show at restaurants for the sake of socialization, etc. Instead of keeping cautiously silent and unmoved in concert halls, noise is much encouraged in pop concerts, with whistles and flowers and balloons and screams and yells all deployed as tactical moves of repositioning power relationships.

And in singing along with the singers in concerts, in privatizing pop music by relocating it via walkman or discman in the media age of the 80's, and in reproducing music by singing via karaoke, rewriting the lyrics by joining popular contests and imitating the stars through mimicry, people get access to heteroglossic voices in society, and a lot more! Nonetheless, one extreme tactic of the people in using popular culture is realized in the establishment of fan club.

Instead of passively sitting by the TV set or radio, waiting for Sam's next album in order to hear his voice, or longing for a show or concert to see him in person, the fan club initiatively organizes events to get "in-touch" with

their idol. The attempt to demystify the superstar by making Sam transparent: by getting hold of his information and working schedule, making friends with Sam's family (e.g. they got private stories told by his mother about his childhood), getting in touch with Sam's record company, TV programme producers, etc., organizing exclusive gatherings like X'mas parties with Sam, and getting the absolute privilege to gate out reporters and outsiders who might usurp from them precious time with their idol. In-group newsletters, calenders, magazines, correspondences are circulated, forming a unique "gang society" with autonomous regulations and power, creating a people-oriented cultural space. Besides creating the "zest" in their alienated social life through Sam, the fans transform their social role from cultural receiver to cultural "maker". And they even attempt to have access to first hand information prior to reporters , the media and audience by attending rehearsals of Sam's performances, having Sam discussed with them the conception of the next album, TV show and movie.³¹ This modifies de Certeau's analyses on the extent cultural consumers make use of cultural spaces, that the consumers do not have to wait for images to be broadcast by TV, to spend time in front of the TV set before they are being made sense of and analysed. They manage to do it *in advance*.

³¹ Information based my interview with Ms. Cynthia Lau Yuen Seung, presently a key committee member of "The Universal Sam Hui Fan Club", conducted on March 1, 1994.

3.3 Politics of Disappearance

The 70's was the era when the Hong Kong people search for identifiable images as their home. Towards the end of the 70's and early 80's the Open Door Policy in China after the Cultural Revolution brought more wealth to Hong Kong in terms of economy. And with the rapid advancement of media technology, the Hong Kong people had by now really 'settled down'. After the mid-80's, as a result of political uncertainties, other problems of identity quest arose. The persistent Sino-British negotiations gave birth to the Joint Declaration in 1984, to be followed later by the passing of the Basic Law in 1990. Instead of being actively involved in home-making, the public responded by 'imploding' themselves in the media, the alternative cultural symbol of home and nonhome, since the media represented not the 'explosions' of the social (e.g. industrialisation, technology, commodification, reification, etc.) but became the key simulation machine reproducing images, signs and codes.³² The people, who absorb all they receive, resist meaning, and erode the boundary between media and the real. For instance, the television suggests nothing but the screen.

³² See Jean Baudrillard, "The Masses: The Implosion of the Social in the Media", *New Literary History* 16:3 (1985), 577-589.

Audience internalizes the media. Thus it is the screen which is watching you. This is people's act to remain content with what is given while simultaneously resisting it in the voice of, ironically, *silence*.

People become indifferent to politics, and to the future of Hong Kong. As in the 50's, they start to emigrate, though this time to leave Hong Kong. The majority of the people are not equipped to leave since they do not meet the criteria for the right of abode of other countries. Hence, the only way for the ordinary people to react is to dispose of their identity, keep silent, emerge into the dreamland of media, and *disappear*. Such an indifferent sentiment best nurtures the rise of popular stars and encourages their massive re-production so as to meet the growing public demand in the mechanism of popular culture industry.

In the midst of keen competition and the flux of younger popular artists, Sam Hui still manages to be popularly used as a site for creating cultural memory. His songs still take care of the politically callous and lost people -- providing voice for the people and allowing them to spell out their anxieties towards the unstable future. Sam is still 'in want', and the space he opens up can still be made use of. Now his uses are actually based on his *presence* on stage, which effectively creates a kind of

public *disappearance*, allowing people to hide themselves at the backstage of the Hong Kong scene.

Baudrillard amplifies the idea of the implosion of the mass into the media by claiming that the mass respond by "the politics of disappearance":

Publicity and opinion polls and the media in general can only be imagined; they only exist on the basis of a disappearance, the disappearance from the public space, from the scene of politics, of public opinion in a form at once theatrical and representative as it was enacted in earlier epochs.³³

People are content to be 'imploded' into the media and let that be their *home of forgetfulness*. Their active engagement in popular culture especially in the late 80's only suggests that they are busily making use of the popular cultural space in order to attain passivity and some peace of mind in themselves. Hence, the tactics of the people become a means to achieve, instead, silence.

For Baudrillard, disappearance is a unique way to resist activity:

³³ Baudrillard, 579.

... disappearance is also its strategy; it is its way of response to this device for capture, for networking, and for forced identification. To this cathodic surface of recording, the individual or the mass reply by a parodic behaviour of disappearance... They turn themselves into an impenetrable and meaningless surface, which is a method of disappearing. They eclipse themselves, they melt into the superficial screen in such a way that their reality and that of their movement... may be radically questioned without making any fundamental change to the probabilistic analysis of their behaviour... there passes a wave of derision, of reversal, and of parody which is the active exploitation, the parodic enactment by the object itself of its mode of disappearance.³⁴

It is common for Sam to capture the trend and psychology of the age and writes songs on them: "Trend of Band-playing" (潮流與夾BAND), "Be Playful" (最緊要好玩), etc.. The people make use of Sam's social sensitivity to create a cultural space of identity absorption. As for them, they would rather remain *anonymous*, and let Sam and other popular idols lead them to the trend. Such an indifferent attitude as reflected in the formation of cultural identity

³⁴ Baudrillard, 583.

allows them to 'disappear'. They participate actively in collective games like the vote for "Top Ten Golden Chinese Songs Award" because they are aware that they can remain anonymous in the election, and they do not mind, though they might even know the insignificance of the role they are put to play in joining such games.

Here is our silent majority. The more they demand the surfacing of meaning from popular culture, the more stable and passive they remain in silence and disappearance. Sam's songs in the 80's steer more towards such abstraction of meaning. Songs that tackle social issues dropped in numbers. Cliches and repetitions are still widely used, with a little parody added every now and then on the unstable future of Hong Kong. Parody is an "active exploitation" not because it exploits standard meanings, but because it provides ambiguous space for the people to both deny and retain their own doubtful identity. (See chapter IV for the analysis of the roles of Sam's voice in facilitating the ambiguous sentiment in the formation of cultural identity of the people).

Since the people partake in the growing tendency of disappearance especially after the 1989 June Fourth Incident in Beijing, they become more and more cynical

towards the political culture in Hong Kong. They enjoy the mild parody on politics offered by popular culture. Hence towards the end of the 80's and 90's, an interesting phenomenon occurs in the media where puns and parodies on the conventional political situation are received with much approval by the people, whose light-heartedness towards politics allows for little serious treatment in popular culture. This partly accounts for the gradual decline of Sam's popularity in late 80's and early 90's when Sam adds to his songs heavy Hong Kong sentiment for an identity quest, which is too heavy for the public whose real desire, instead of staying home, is to disappear altogether! A soft pun or parody on politics is the most that the popular can tolerate and find pleasure in as, for example, evidenced in the song "Japanese Doll" (see Chapter IV for detailed analysis). Another song, "People on the Same Boat"

(同舟共濟), exhibits the unwillingness of the Hong Kong people turning into second class citizens abroad, hence advocating an aspiration of unity in Hong Kong. Similarly, "Made in Hong Kong" (香港製造) advocates the best side of the territories: "You and me are proud of the goodness of Hong Kong ... constructions everywhere are signs of prosperity" (香港好, 你我都覺自豪 ... 到處建設有前途); in "To be a Free Person" (做個自由人), human rights are brought to the fore: "Everybody should have freedom. Keep fighting and human right will be there" (人人應該享有自由 ... 人權如望獲到手, 必須繼續鬥).

The unfavourable political milieu after the anti-democratic June Fourth crackdown in 1989 in China do have a strong discouraging impact on the people of Hong Kong. Naturally, they lose faith in the fantasies provoked in the powerless mythical figure offered by Sam. Dreams are shattered, and the anesthesia of the lyrics etherealised. Instead of reflecting and voicing for the public minds, Sam's last resort to constructing a homely Hong Kong identity fails to cope with the hopeless feeling of the mass. Sam has introduced too many pressing meanings in his last album, which are too heavy to bear in the popular scene. And this also marks the end of the possibilities of his being used by the people in the realm of popular culture in Hong Kong.

IV Identity Formation as Voice Formation

Sam Hui has been notorious for his unartistic voice. But the lack of depth and force in his vocal quality facilitates rather than hinders his singing career. One would rather say that it is because of the unpolished and untrained neighbourhood voice of Sam that appeals to the common mass. In fact, the voice of Sam Hui can be considered both as a space for generating popular identity as well as a homely feel.

"Sam speaks for the people." Nearly all interviewees³⁵ gave similar comments on Sam when asked their impression of the already retired superstar. Of the 210 songs ever sung by Sam throughout his career, the best remembered ones are those that heavily and directly deal with the plight and grievance of the grassroot people, the lower income group of society who suffer most from inflation and exploitation as a result of the economic bloom during the late 60's and 70's. It becomes interesting to note how Sam "speaks for the people".

³⁵ Several interviews have been conducted by me with people like the manager of Commercial Radio, DJ, producer of record company, fan club committee, intellectuals of Sam's age, etc.

4.1 Vulgar Voices

The language a community uses reflects its cultural identity, for language is the collective world-view shared among a linguistic community. Through the analysis of language (words, voice) use of Sam, we can penetrate into the formation of cultural identity in his time. Sam directly transplants the colloquial, spoken Cantonese which has no standard written Chinese equivalence into his extremely vernacular, or to put it more bluntly, "vulgar" lyrics. However, they are not "cheap". This is important in the formation of an identifiable image, for the object to be identified with is always the object of desire. Stuart Hall calls the image an "imaginative rediscovery" that offers "a way of imposing an imaginary coherence on the experience of dispersal and fragmentation, which is the history of all enforced diasporas."³⁶

What the people want to adhere to is a higher social status that can allow them simultaneously to retain their own voice. Sam's university background suggests a higher social status, and the Cantonese movement depicted in his songs set an ideal space for identity displacement by

³⁶ See Stuart Hall's discussion on the identity formation of the colonized with reference to Fanon in "Cultural Identity and Diapora" collected in *Identity, Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990), p. 224.

retaining the people's own voice. But the psychology involved is more complicated. First, they aspire to an image of higher social status as the desired space for identification. Second, they still want to retain their own voice so as to feel at ease and at home. Third, they unfortunately intend to forget about their own voice by abstracting meaning out of it and turning it into parodies.

Take the excessive proliferation of vulgar clichés in Sam Hui's songs as an illustration. Thematic significance, the content, is overshadowed by the echoing effect of the form, through which meanings are proliferated more in order to make you forget than to remember. The song "The Last Message" (天才與白痴) is overflowed with diversifying types of people with a pun on the Cantonese words "guy" (仔), "ghost/foreigner" (鬼), and "things/matters" (嘢), creating a chain effect of linguistic profusion. Similarly, the overflow of repetitions becomes the subject of the songs, like the song "Genius, Idiot and Money" (天才白痴錢錢錢) which has the first line "Money, Money, Money" (錢錢錢) and the last line, in English, "No money no talk" repeated. They are signs that convey no message except for an image, an atmosphere that is adhered to the mindless listeners' short-term memory and desire. Then next time when you hear it, you start afresh.

The norms of well-controlled and regulated language now crumble, opening up access for reproduction of meanings that may well be parodied. In Fiske's words, "excess involves elements of the parodic, and parody allows us to mock at the conventional, to evade its ideological thrust, to turn its norms back on themselves".³⁷ That is to say, the people aspire to something higher, and yet still want to keep their own voice. This drives them to mock at their contradictory psychology in positing their cultural identity. This psychology of striving for *the better but not the best* and to retain their own status but to parody it simultaneously can well provide them with a space of social positioning and re-positioning.

4.2 Language Movement as Production of Voice

Sam is most probably the first singer song-writer who invents a huge sum of lexicons which may simply be replaced by directly phonetic transcriptions. What Sam attempts here is to re-map the contours of language use hitherto confined by normal language practices. The colloquial style are no mere words. They are the formation

³⁷ Fiske, 114.

of *voice*. Popular music has not so much to do with music but voice, the human agency behind the whole music production. If we take sound as the taking of time, then voice should be the taking of place, which prepares for the (trans)formation into a *space*.³⁸ Popular music, especially rock music, has always been stigmatized as a degraded commodity mass-produced in the culture industry, and is devoid of aesthetic value (for being 'vulgar' and 'low'). However, such a claim has definitely neglected the social dimension of music in the era of industrialization and capitalism. In disagreement with the view of the Frankfurt School toward popular culture, Jacques Attali holds a positive view toward music and stresses the social and historical discourse which constitutes a new experience of semiology:

Music, the organization of noise... reflects the manufacture of society; it constitutes the audible waveband of the vibrations and signs that make up society. An instrument of

³⁸ For the notion of voice in relation to space see Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977); Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (Boston, Mass, 1964); Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie & Edward Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962); Giorgio Agamben, *Language and Death / The Place of Negativity*, trans. Karen E. Pinkus (University of Minnesota Press, 1991).

understanding, it prompts us to decipher a sound form of knowledge.³⁹

Such a "sound form of knowledge" entails the relationship between power and knowledge, and immediately it leads one to the realm of politics in language. Popular music surely falls into this category, which belongs to the "subversive strain of music [that] has always managed to survive, subterranean and pursued, the inverse image of this political channelization...an instrument of the ecstatic cult, an outburst of uncensored violence."⁴⁰ Thus, the primary function of music is "not to be sought in aesthetics, which is a modern invention, but in the effectiveness of its participation in social regulation."⁴¹ Sam's voice is a revolutionary move to subvert the official language use that demarcates and highlights cultural differences. As a bilingual singer, Sam breaks down the ideological and political execution of diaglossia within the typical Hong Kong linguistic context.

In the 50's, immigrants in Hong Kong speaking different dialects formed their own peer groups, grasping the last breath of an autotelic Chinese identity. Their next

³⁹ Jacques Attali, *Noise, The Political Economy of Music*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), p.4.

⁴⁰ Attali, 13.

⁴¹ Attali, 30.

generation, however, spoke fluent Cantonese, which had few social and cultural practices in society. English was spoken by the governor and his government officials on television screen; songs sung at schools were either in English or in Mandarin; and mass was conducted, unfortunately, in Latin! The air play of popular songs at the radio station was dominated by western rock or folk music, and the in-flow of Taiwanese songs-of-the-age (時代曲) sung by singers like Tsing Shan (青山) and Yiu So-yung (姚蘇蓉). Except for a few Cantonese songs sung by Yau ya (尤雅), Chan hou-de (陳浩德), Lai Sa (麗莎), Cheng Kam-cheong (鄭錦昌), Cheung Hau-mo (Great L) (張孝武), etc., there were no Canto-pop hits at all. In fact, Cantonese was regarded as the third language which was ranked by the elitists as low, and despised by the people. Cantonese was a vulgar language used and spoken by lower rank people, though it was spoken by the larger majority.

The High language, English, plays a much more important role in Sam's early song-writing years. In fact his first few released albums are all written and sung in perfect English. It was until 1971, four years after his singing career that he headed the Canto-pop song wave that swiftly swept through the territories, and later to the areas of Chinese settlements all over the world. Now, the Low language, Chinese, and the even "Lower" Cantonese

Low language, Chinese, and the even "Lower" Cantonese dialect gained the upper hand in the tug-of-war of language change during the 70's, especially when the language policy of recognizing Chinese as the official language sharing equal footing with English was adopted by the government in 1974. Take the oralized lyrics of Sam's songs as example. Most of these oralized scripts are, in Fiske's words, "function orientated" rather than "rule oriented". The purpose of which is

not to conform, to expose the arbitrariness of linguistic rules and to show that they are not so much functional as socially distinctive and disciplinary: breaking them rarely destroys meaning but says much about social class.⁴²

This creates a good dwelling space for the people to break through their social cage primordially infringed on the linguistic level, for linguistics is often the most ideologically ordered place for the play of politics. Unlike the hitherto practice of the highly sophisticated literary lyrics either in the Mandarin songs-of-the-age, or in early Cantonese songs, the oral-based language employed by Sam is always context-based. It fits into the situatedness of the popular who have been longing to exert a voice of their

⁴² Fiske, 113.

own in social discourse. And it further breaks the politics of diaglossic language use in everyday life. Sam's voice thus serves as the window to the ideologies of his time, a "battlefield" which opens up the terrain of knowledge, a new mode of understanding, a place of subversion and social regulation. Hence, it is a *cultural space* of voicing identity in the politics of language reform.

The lyric movement initiated by Sam is soon received by the public. One might regard the phenomenon as a "representation", a mirror held up to their living reality. However, the phenomenon is far more than mere representation of the popular, for representation is the least powerful move in any form of resistance. Sam's power is exactly *not* exercised in the one-dimensional mimesis of the people. Rather, he *makes* the people's cultural identity in the absence of endearing cultural roots.

4.3 Space for Enunciation and Heteroglossia

The people's voice is not represented by Sam Hui. Rather, Sam is used by them as a site for playing the politics of difference, and as a space for cultural

identification. The choice of vulgar taste should not be perceived merely as a product of the culture industry. Instead, it defines what that taste means in terms of the identity of the people *of the present*, a mediated identity within a specific cultural history.

Addressing himself to Tony Bennett's recent paper in which he claims that the problem of the leftist accounts of the popular is that of the mismodelling of "the people" on the basis of an ideal people both in the nostalgic and the future mode, but never the present, Simon Frith criticizes that, in popular music, conventional analyses and studies have put too much value on identifying popular music as agit-pop and folk pop, providing a mere "quantitative" view, thereby neglecting the terms of reference of the popular:

What has not been examined is how music works to construct the people. To put it in another way, the description "popular" music is not simply a quantitative description ... it describes, too, a cultural form, part of whose significance is, precisely, that it offers an account of the popular ... popular music is music that takes up certain spaces in popular memory, that established shared codes of musical meaning ... to make a particular sort of unity out of the listening public. Subgenres of popular music -- rock,

disco, reggae ... give cultural shape to "taste publics" in doing so help define what those tastes mean in terms of identity, commitment, value, so on. You are what you listen to; you are not what you do not listen to.⁴³

Here the "particular sort of unity" should not be read as the nostalgic totality or Hegelian reconciliation embraced by the Frankfurt School pessimists. Popular music, or in Attali's term, "radical music" deviates from the "sphere of music" by affirming the position of *dissonance* as a subversive gesture counter-acting with the nostalgic and bourgeois belief in harmony and the eventual realm of reconciliation:

Before political economy, then, music became the bourgeoisie's substitute for religion, the incarnation of an idealized humanity, the image of harmonious, nonconflictual, abstract time that progresses and runs its course, a history that is predictable and controllable...what is prohibited are repeated dissonances, in other words, critiques of differences.⁴⁴

⁴³ Simon Frith, "Art Ideology & Pop Practice", in *Marxism And The Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Cary Nelson & Lawrence Grossberg (Macmillan Education, 1988), pp. 469-470.

⁴⁴ Attali, 62.

Here the emergence of dissonance opens up a terrain of voice formation apart from the mere production of sound or noise, the opening up of a space of and for voices and identities. Music, like voice, is never free from its cultural constitution. It becomes a simulacrum, a network of repetition where the proliferation of meanings and non-meaning are the key signs. Popular music thus forges the people's memory, constituting their social and political positionings. As a result, their cultural identity is made up of different voices, inscribing *heteroglossia*⁴⁵ in a diversified albeit commodified society. Rather, the collective unity being formed through various uses of popular music constituents function to actively enunciate the identity -- creating a space for the enunciation (voicing) of cultural desires and popular memory:

Pop gives people ways to speak themselves, to think themselves, that can counter (though they often confirm) official ways of saying things. One of the important tasks of populism is to control the ways in which the private becomes public (and vice versa); one of the important tasks of pop is to subvert that control.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ See M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson & Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981).

⁴⁶ Frith, 471.

Sam's soft dissonance voice becomes the best space for enunciation. He subverts the diaglossic linguistic control so as to retain the diversifying cultural differences within the Hong Kong linguistic community, hence turning the practice of diaglossia into heteroglossia, defying the social demarcation of the high and the low. His voice is not as 'cheap' or 'working-class-like' as some Canto-pop song singers of the time e.g. Cheung Hao Mo (Great L) (張孝武), Cheng Kam Cheong (鄭錦昌), etc., and neither is his voice as artistic and perfect as singers like Roman Tam (羅文) or Yan Lei (甄妮) both of whom are famous Title-song singers of TV soap opera series in the 70's. Sam's voice lies in the middle range: gentle but vulgar. So listening to him, you are neither high nor low. You *become* yourself. If Sam speaks for the people, he is actually speaking for *each individual* who embodies in him heteroglossic spaces for the enunciation of different identities. Sam's revolutionary movement in *repositioning* the value of Cantonese calls for the people's affirmation of a *Hong Kong Cultural Identity* which has been absent from the cultural history of Hong Kong. From that time onwards, a quest for cultural consciousnesses, as well as a homely local identity become the cultural orientation throughout the 70's. Thus, the polemics of cultural identifications and differences are put to the frontier of Hong Kong culture.

To be at home is to diffuse the inside/outside spatial dichotomy that is an imagined totality *per se*. It is a practised place where class boundaries are demolished. Popular music in the form of voice formation also helps to construct a homely feel by expanding the distance between the individual and social confines through the process of *silencing*, i.e., the replacement of natural background noise, slipping the spaces of meaninglessness and relations into the organization of our everyday life. For instance, Sam's songs were widely broadcast via radio during the late 60's when radio broadcast was the only medium that was easily accessible to the common mass; and later they were remade into light melody that were played as background music in restaurants like McDonald's and Cafe de Coral. Meanwhile, in public places like elevators and shopping malls the voice of Sam always pervaded. Everywhere, Sam's songs conjured up a habitual environment for everyday life activities, marking the territorial identification of residents and users and making them feel always at home. They are turned into the place and space of the people, where cultural memories in terms of everyday life practices are constructed. They serve as the background music that integrate all kinds of consumers and level class differences. The social significance of these popular songs is therefore tremendous.

If the power of a polysemic cultural text lies in its openness for and flexibility to public readings in diffusing social differences, I would like to argue that the power of Sam lies not in the diffusion of differences but, on the contrary, the retainment of them, making people feel at ease with their social allegiances. Such is the very power of popular sign in mass media. On the one hand people gain a new experience of cultural togetherness (identity) in the sharing of the same air play time and space, without regard to their different social and class allegiances; on the other hand there is no actual fusion of social differences at all. Rather, the heterogeneous identities within society are retained, leading to the expression of multivocalic identities.

A movement is brought about by Sam in changing the hegemonic practices of language use by introducing dissonance to the lyrics he sings, which provides an outlet for the people who have been deprived of heterogeneous space in language for enunciation in the community. They have long been waiting for a voice!

4.4 Multivocalic Identities

In opening up the social space for heterogeneous voices, the songs of Sam Hui refashion the role of interpretation and the readership of popular songs. Theme in popular music is weak. Instead, only sign, a material thing, dominates. Its function is to produce reproducible meaning, to make meaning real. Hence, any reading of signs is bound to be ideological, a practicing semiology.⁴⁷ This opens up a space for popular readership and identification. As a result, there is no unitary text, no unitary producer or spectator:

the role of a radical hermeneutics of the mass media would be to heighten awareness of all the voices relayed by the mass media, to point both to the "off screen" voices of hegemony and to the contestatory voices that are muffled or suppressed...[to] recuperate the critical and utopian potential of mass-mediated texts...the issue is not to impose an interpretation but rather to bring out the text's muffled voices.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ V.N.Volosinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, trans. Ladislav Matejka and I.R. Titunik (Harvard University Press, 1973), pp.9-15.

⁴⁸ Robert Stam, *Subversive Pleasures: Bakhtin, Cultural Criticism, and Film* (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1989), p.221.

Such a Bakhtinian view of stressing the integration of the ideological with the semiological allows the consciousness of voices to infiltrate the mass media. Let us take Sam's "Japanese Doll" as an example.

"Japanese Doll"

Last night I met a Japanese Doll at the Tokyo Department Store

She's got big eyes and pointed jaws

Just like Akina Nakamori/ which is no kidding

She's interesting and special/ very Japanese in style

I considered myself a death fighter of love

Romantic, flirty and vulgar enough

Wore purple sunglasses/ I looked handsome

In my 150 pound body, charming, and decided to take action

Hello kon ba wa , lady, how are you

wata shiwa Hong kong no Matchy-desu

anata-wa tate-mo kawai

I spoke Japanese to make friend with her

We jumped into a Toyota

Dined and danced in Casablanca

So happy that I jumped up to the stage and sang "Careless Whisper"

Walked under the moon I thereby fantasized...

Marry her and my status will improve

She'll do the washing, make soup, message me and serve me tea

1997, Ha! There will be no fear at all

We can open a sushibar in Harajuku

We went for midnight supper

I ordered Tempura

She ordered a lot with extravagant sashimi
 It costed me HK\$ 3,008 /what a sum!
 She nonetheless smiled and said Arigato Gozaimashita

I accompanied her to go back to the hotel lobby where her
 father stood

He stared at me and shouted nan desu ka
 My daughter has not yet reach 16 and a half
 He was a grade 10 swordsman
 He invited me for a duel.

* Sayo nara I hold my tears and said goodbye
 Thanks thanks thanks thanks Monica
 Searching in my pocket, alas, only some 8 dollars left
 A month's salary had gone
 This time I lost terribly

* repeat

《日本娃娃》

尋晚响東急碰正個日本娃娃
 對眼特別大仲有尖尖嘅下巴
 有啲似中森明葉唔係講假
 趣怪又特別真頭日本伙

求愛取死隊我屬御三家
 最注重浪漫又夠風騷夠肉麻
 戴起副紫色太陽鏡人就蕭洒
 百五磅魅力實行太轟炸

Hello kon ba wa 小姐妳好嗎
 wata shiwa Hong Kong noMatchy - desu
 anata - wa tote-mo kawai
 实行用架文跟佢 friend of

同佢去出街跳上架 To-yota
 去晚飯直落共舞於 Casablanca
 趁高興張身上台唱 Careless whisper
 再散步A下連隨幻想吓

要吐娃娃即刻就变晒身價
光衫煲湯掙骨鍊背齊遞茶
1997 哈 啲陣冇駛怕
實行住原宿開間 Sushibar

同佢去宵夜我叫 Tempura
佢叫立立雜雜刺身鬼咁豪華
嗰我數三千零八成分身家
佢笑住仲話 Arigato Gozaimashi ta

陪佢嚟 lobby 企正個日本爸爸
佢眼呀掘掘大喝摩 nan desu ka
亞女佢今年唔夠十六 & a half
佢劇道十段話同我鏢吓

* Jayo nara 忍著淚說 Goodbye 啦
thanks thanks thanks thanks Monica
撲撲個袋唉駛喇八個幾咋
蝕埋份糧添呢次養咗咗

* 重複

Evidently, the song employs cliches and borrows key lines from many hit songs of the time to create a collage, marking every possible meaning which in turn empties all possibilities of meaning. Upon analysis, the following features can be summarized:

1. **Linguistic Collage:** Making use of Cantonese, English and Japanese, the song is a typical example of code-switching with phrases like "to make friend with her"

(距佢 friend 吓), "I accompanied her back to the hotel lobby"

(同佢嚟 lobby), "has not yet reached 16 and a half"

(唔夠十六 & a half), "sayonara" (goodbye in Japanese), "I held my tears and said goodbye" (忍着淚說 Goodbye).

2. **Citation of key lines from other popular songs.**

The song makes several citations of famous songs like "Casablanca", a hit song by Bertie Higgins; "Careless Whisper", a song by Wham! which has been adapted into Japanese and Cantonese versions; "I held my Tears and Said Goodbye", a line taken from the name of a song sung by a Hong Kong group called Young Tigers (小虎隊); "Thanks, thanks, thanks, thanks, Monica", a line taken from top star singer Lesile Cheung's song "Monica", which is itself an adaptation of a Japanese hit song.

3. **Political Parody:** There is a light parody on the fear of the Hong Kong people depicted in the line "1997, Ha! There will be no Fear at all, we can open a sushibar in Harajuku" (1997 哈 咁陣冇乜嘢怕, 實行住原宿開間sushibar).

4. **Everyday Reference:** Everyday reference is captured to give a sense of familiarity. For example, there

are references to famous Japanese shopping mall like the Tokyo Department Store, and a famous Japanese popular star, Akina Nakamori.

The song nearly embodies everything typically consumed in Hong Kong in the decade of the 80's when Japanese idols and songs creating Japanese hits were leading the trend in the popular music scene. Local record companies bought a lot of Japanese songs and reproduced them for their local singers. Besides Japanese elements, the song also covers the psychology of the Hong Kong people who become pessimistic and carry with them "vague sense" of "Fin-de-Siecle" especially when there is no promising democratic political structure to implement the policy of "One Country Two Systems". Here, China deliberately marginalizes the voices of the Hong Kong people by annexing the last hope of the so-called "three-legged stool" (三脚椅) model. People lost faith in neither the British nor the Chinese authority. The brain-drain crisis and outflow of capital further shoke the dream of continual stability and prosperity for 50 years promised by Deng Xiao-ping. The song offers dream as an alternative for the people, yet it does not really "mean" what it offers. It simultaneously (re)produces and encroaches what it means to say. The excessive copying of pop elements from other hit songs, and

the practices of code-switching suggest little message, meaning or value that can be fixed once and for all. But listeners find these elements familiar and they feel at home with their life as it is.

"Japanese Doll" thus opens up a space for popular readership and identification. It produces a lot of reproducible meanings. By making the song popular, by gaining mass appeal, popular culture makes meanings 'real'. It has successfully located as many "real" elements identifiable in common popular experience as possible. The public do not necessarily want message/meaning more than familiarity and pleasure. They need to recognize the "muffled voices" in the text -- the utopian potential of mass-mediated culture so-to-speak. Hence, the many clichés used in the song displace meaningful interpretations which are actions rather too serious and out of place.

It is only when we see the dynamic power of the osmotic voices within a community that we begin to understand the fluid nature of the formation of cultural identity. It is a process of cultural dialectics in a boundless yet situated context where heteroglossic views and experiences should be equally catered for; it is a 'matrix' where all that is solid melts, multiplied identities

and identifications one posited, and subject positions find their home.

V Cultural Identity and the Ordinary

To the Ordinary Person.⁴⁹

To a common hero, an ubiquitous character, walking in countless thousands on the streets. In invoking here at the outset of my narratives the absent figure who provides both their beginning and their necessity, I inquire into the desire whose impossible object he represents. What are we asking this oracle whose voice is almost indistinguishable from the rumble of history to license us, to authorize us to say, when we dedicate to him/her the writing that one formerly offered in praise of the gods or the inspiring muses?

This anonymous hero is very ancient. S/He is the murmuring voice of the societies. In all ages, s/he comes before texts. S/He does not expect representations. S?He squats now at the center of our scientific stages. The floodlights have moved away from the actors who possess proper names and social blazons, turning first toward the chorus of secondary characters, then settling on the mass of the audience. The increasingly sociological and

⁴⁹ This passage is taken from the front page of Michel de Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life*. The original word de Certeau uses here is "man" which I find uncomfortable with due to its sexist implication. I deliberately alter the word and consider "person" more appropriate and gender-wise encompassing. And the pronoun for "He" has likewise been changed into "S/He".

anthropological perspective of inquiry privileges the anonymous and the everyday in which zoom lenses cut out metonymic details -- parts taken for the whole. Slowly the representatives that formerly symbolized families, groups, and orders disappear from the stage they dominated during the epoch of the name. We witness the advent of the number. It comes along with democracy, the large city, administrations, cybernetics. It is a flexible and continuous mass, woven tight like a fabric with neither rips nor darned patches, a multitude of quantified heroes who lose names and faces as they become the ciphered river of the streets, a mobile language of computations and rationalities that belong to no one.

-- Michel de Certeau

The ordinary people come before texts. They do not expect representations. They are the unnamed people, the majority of the community, who are thus the makers of history, culture and cultural identity. So much has been said about the different kinds of uses of Sam Hui, and the different levels of popular culture with specific reference to popular music in Hong Kong. Reflecting upon the whole project, I begin to see the process of investigating cultural identity in a new light.

Cultural identity is a process, a lived process mediated in the popular realm. It is not so much to be deduced out of intellectual analysis than to be realized and lived through the most ordinary forms of life. It becomes a problematic when one leaves ones home, or feels unhomely. It is more properly cultural experience rather than knowledge.

The cultural identity of Hong Kong becomes problematic when Hong Kong people leave their home to become unhomed. For one thing they are considered Hong Kong Residents when they leave home through the immigration counter. When they arrive in Taiwan, the custom officers there will cross out any indication of or claim for Chinese nationality, and drive them to the counter for foreigners. In other countries the Hongkongese may

easily be considered Chinese, etc.. Such a conflicting view on Hong Kong's identity reflects not only the ambiguity of Hong Kong's "national identity", but also the way Hong Kong people perceive themselves. Stepping into the period of Sino-British negotiations over the transfer of sovereignty in 1997, the sense of self-recognition, self-positioning, and self-realization in terms of political and cultural rights are hastened. Hong Kong is constantly stimulated by multicultural experiences and exchanges in nearly every aspect of daily life. The pursuit of cultural identity does not so much suggest that the Hong Kong people want to fix it than indicate that they are thinking about the issue seriously. Whether they have reached the limit beyond which they feel the need to articulate or enunciate their identity is a political issue. Otherwise, they just live it out in the most ordinary practices via the popular culture they help make every day.

To study the different layers of cultural identity of a community, the best starting point is without question an investigation of the popular, an examination of the life pattern of ordinary people in Hong Kong. Popular culture is no doubt the best entry-point in cities where information, media and tele-technology are highly developed and dominant. And it is especially relevant to study the history of the last two or three decades when Hong Kong as the

center of international communication began to take shape. Through investigating the historically and culturally rich figure of Sam Hui, I hope that the fluid formation of cultural identities can be revealed, which would help to develop some, if not full, understanding of this miraculous island, home for some six million anonymous common heroes -- the people of Hong Kong.

Bibliography

- Adorno, Theodor W. *Aesthetic Theory*. London: Routledge, 1984.
- . *Prisms*. Trans. Samuel & Shierry Weber. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1982.
- . *The Culture Industry*. Trans. by J. M. Bernstein. London: Routledge, 1991.
- Altheide, David. *Media Power*. Beverly Hills: Sage, 1985.
- Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. 2nd ed. New York & London: Verso, 1991.
- Attali, Jacques. *Noise, The Political Economy of Music*. Trans. Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985.
- Bakhtin, M.M. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Ed. Michael Holquist. Trans. Caryl Emerson & Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981.
- Barthes, Roland. *Images-Music-Text*. Trans. Stephen Heath. Glasgow: Fontana/Collins, 1977.
- Baudelaire, Charles. *Selected Writing on Art and Artists*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972.
- Baudrillard, Jean. "The Masses: The Implosion of the Social in the Media". *New Literary History* 16:3 (1985), 577-589.
- . *In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities... Or the End of the Social and Other Essays*. Trans. Paul Foss, Paul

Patton & John Ston. New York: Foreign Agent Series, 1983.

---. *Simulations*. New York: Semiotext(e), 1983.

Bhabha, Homi. "Remembering Fanon: Self, Psyche, And The Colonial Condition". In *Remaking History*. Ed. Barnara Kmmgar & Phil Marian. Seattle: Bay Press, 1989.

---, ed. *Nation and Narration*. London & New York: Routledge, 1990.

---. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge, 1994.

Cohen, Stanley, & L. Taylor. *Escape Attempts: The Theory & Practice of Resistance to Everyday Life*. London: Allen Lane, 1976.

Collins, Richard, et al. *Media Culture & Society : A Critical Reader*. London: Sage, 1986.

Davis, Michael. *Constitutional Confrontation in Hong Kong: Issues & Implications of the Basic Law*. New York: St. Martins Press, 1990.

de Certeau, Michel , *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Trans. Steven F. Rendall. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984.

---. *Heterologies/ Discourse on the Other*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986.

Dominguez, Virginia, "Invoking Culture: The Messy Side of "Cultural Politics", *The South Atlantic Quaterly* 91:1(Winter 1992), 19-42.

Finnegan, Ruth. *Hidden Musicians*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

Fiske, John. *Understanding Popular Culture*. Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989.

Fok Kai Cheong. *Lectures on Hong Kong History: Hong Kong's Role in Modern Chinese History*. Hong Kong: The Commerical Press, 1990.

Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish/The Birth of Prison*. London: Penguin, 1977.

---. *Power/Knowledge*. Ed. Colin Gordon. New York: Pantheon, 1980.

Frith, Simon. "The Cultural Study of Popular Music". In *Cultural Studies*. Ed. Lawrence Grossberg, et al. New York & London: Routledge, 1992, pp.174-186.

---. "Art Ideology & Pop Practice" in *Marxism And The Interpretation of Culture*. Ed. Cary Nelson & Lawrence Grossberg. Macmillan Education, 1988, pp.461-475.

Gellner, Ernst. *Culture, Identity and Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.

Giddens, Anthony. *Modernity & Self Identity*. Stanford: Stanford Univeristy Press, 1991.

Gurevitch, Michael, et al. *Culture, Society & the Media*. London: Methuenm, 1982.

Habermas, Jurgen. *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987.

Hall, Stuart. "Cultural Identity and Diapora." In *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*. Ed. Jonathan Rutherford. London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990, pp.222-237.

---. "Old and New Identities". In *Culture, Globalization & The World-System*. Ed. Anthony King. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991, pp.41-68.

Hermes, Joke. "Media, Meaning and Everyday Life." *Cultural Studies* 7:3 (October, 1993), 493-506.

- Huyssen, Andreas. *After the Great Divide/Modernism, Mass Culture and Postmodernism*. Macmillan, 1986.
- Jarvie, Ian C. *Window on Hong Kong: A Sociological Study of the Hong Kong Film Industry & Its Audience*. Hong Kong: Center of Asian Studies, HKU, 1977.
- Keller, Douglas. *Jean Baudrillard: From Marxism to Postmodernism and Beyond*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989.
- King, Ambrose. "Administrative Absorption of Politics in Hong Kong: Emphasis on the Grass Roots Level." *Asian Survey* 15:5 (1975).
- Kuan, Hsin-chi, & S. Lau. *Mass Media & Politics in Hong Kong*. Hong Kong: Center for Hong Kong Studies, CUHK, 1988.
- Laclau, Ernesto, & C. Mouffe. *Hegemony & Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*. London: Verso, 1988.
- Lane, Kevin. *Sovereignty & Status: The Historical Roots of China's Hong Kong Policy*. Boulder: Westview, 1989.
- Lash, Scott & Jonathan Friedman, ed. *Modernity & Identity*. Oxford & Cambridge, Mass., 1992.
- Lau Siu-Kai. *Decolonization Without Independence & the Poverty of Political Leaders in Hong Kong*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies, 1990.
- . *Society & Politics in Hong Kong*. Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1982.
- Lau Siu-kai and Ho Kam-fai. "Social Accommodation of Politics: the Case of the Young Hong Kong Workers". *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics* 20:2 (1982).

- Marcuse, Herbert , *One-Dimensional Man*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1964.
- McLuhan, Marshal. *Understanding Media : The Extensions of Man*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964.
- Memmi, Albert. *The Colonizer & the Colonized*. London: Souvenir Press, 1974.
- Mukerji, Chandra & Michael Schudson. *Thinking Popular Culture*. Berkeley: Univeristy of California Press, 1991.
- Nandy, Ashis. *The Intimate Enemy: Loss & Recovery of Self Under Colonialism*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983.
- Pope-Hennessy, James. *Half-Crown Colony: A Political Profile of Hong Kong*. Boston: Little Brown, 1969.
- Rutherford, Jonathan, ed. *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*. London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990.
- Scott, Ian. *Political Change and the Crisis of Legitimacy in Hong Kong*. Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1989.
- Stam, Robert. *Subversive Pleasures: Bakhtin, Cultural Criticism, and Film*. Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1989.
- Wong, Thomas & Tai Lok Lui. *From One Brand of Politics to One Brand of Political Culture*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies, 1992.
- Venturi, Robert. *Learning From Las Vegas*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1977.
- Volosinov, V.N. *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*. Trans. Ladislav Matejka and I.R. Titunik. Harvard University Press, 1973.

Chinese References

The Complete Sam Hui Lyrics Collections. Ed. Sam Hui Lyrics Collection Working Group. Hong Kong: The South (International) Trading Co., 1993.

許冠傑天書工作組編：《許冠傑天書》。香港：南方(國際)貿易公司，1993。

Chou, Wah-shan. *Consumer Culture: Images. Words. Music*. Hong Kong: Youth Literary Books, 1990.

周華山：《粵語流行曲四十年》。古今香港系列，香港：三聯，1990。

Law, Fu. *A Journey to Hong Kong Culture*. Hong Kong: Chung Hwa Book, 1991.

羅孚：《香港文化漫遊》。今日香港系列，香港：中華書局，1993。

Leung, Ping-kwan, ed. *Popular Culture in Hong Kong*. Hong Kong: Joint Publishing, 1993.

梁秉鈞編：《香港的流行文化》。嶺南學院現代中文文學研究中心專題研究叢書，香港：三聯，1993。

Sze, Man-hung, and Ng Chun-hung, ed. *Studies in Hong Kong Popular Culture*. Hong Kong: Joint Publishing, 1993.

史文鴻，吳俊雄編：《香港普及文化研究》。香港：三聯，1993。

Wong, Chi-wah. *Cantopop Songs in Fourty Years*. Hong Kong: Joint Publishing, 1990.

黃志華：《粵語流行曲四十年》。古今香港系列，香港：三聯，1990。

Yung, Wai-mi and Linda Lai, ed. *Media Citizens*. Hong Kong: Excellence Book House, 1993.

翁偉微，黎青嫻：《媒介國民》。香港：卓越書樓，1993。

Appendix

A Chronology of Sam Hui

- 1948 - born in a musician family on 6 September 1948 in Quangdong province
 - father a famous traditional Chinese musician
 - mother belonged to the Chinese opera

- 1950 - moved to Hong Kong with his family (three elder brothers and one younger sister), and settled in Diamond Hill
 - moved to So Uk Estate later

- 1964 - attended St. Francis Secondary School
 - formed the Harmonicks Band

- 1965 - performed in night clubs and 'The Sound of Music' (樂韻之聲), a TV programme for Rediffusion (麗的呼聲)
 - later dismissed Harmonicks, then joined the *Bar Six*, members including Willie (威利) and Tony Onchez

- 1966 - attended A-level class at Yin Wah College
 - joined the *Lotus* as major vocal
 - 'The Adoring Sam Hui Fans Club' formed, with Samuella Liu and Nancy Han as chairpersons
 - performed in hotels, where he met the 14 year-old Rebecca Jane Fleming who later became his wife

- 1967 - joined the Diamond Record Company
 - his first album 'Just a Little' and second single 'I'll Be Waiting' well-received
 - 20 November, started to host the 'Star Show' for TVB

- 1969 - entered the University of Hong Kong, major in psychology
 - left the *Lotus*

- fan club restructured and became 'The Official Sam Hui Club' with Jimmy Chan as chairperson
- 1970 - recorded Folk Compilations 'First Folk Album' and 'Second Folk Album' for Lai Fung Record Co. (麗風唱片公司) as an individual singer, in which the song 'Interlude' went top of local billboard
- released another single 'Time of the Season'
 - finished his first film 'Little Hero of the Road' (馬路小英雄) with Golden Harvest (HK) Ltd (嘉禾電影公司)
- 1971 - joined Polygram Record Co.
- released the single 'April Lady'
 - hosted weekly TV programme 'Blessings from the Twin Stars' (雙星報喜) for TVB with his brother Michael Hui
 - released first Cantonese song 'Spirit of Iron Tower' (鐵塔凌雲) which became the first Canto-pop song hit in Hong Kong, and later to be collected in his album 'Tricky Twin Stars' (鬼馬雙星)
 - 2 August, performed in Pop Folk '71
 - married Rebecca Jane Fleming
 - 'Little Hero of the Road' (馬路小英雄) with box income of HK\$5,000,000
- 1972 - released two singles: 'The Morning After' and 'Skyline Pigeon'
- finished another film 'Little Hero Sweeping through Chinatown' (小英雄大鬧唐人街)
- 1973 - charity concerts in Singapore and Malaysia
- 19 September, one solo concert at City Hall
 - the song 'Lost Horizon' went top of billboard
- 1974 - February, 'The Morning After' album sold out 1000 copies within one day

- the film 'Smart Number One' (綽頭狀元) on screen
 - released single 'Theme from Jeremy'
 - November, the song 'Tricky Twin Stars' (鬼馬雙星) became the first Canto-pop song ever broadcast in BBC Radio and Radio Hong Kong English Channel
 - HK\$6,000,000 record-breaking box income from the film 'Tricky Twin Stars'
 - 5 November, concert with the *Lotus* at City Hall
 - 27 December, 'Sam Hui's Night' at Caritas Centre Hong Kong
- 1975 - 'Tricky Twin Stars' received the Golden Record Award by Polygram
- 14 May, concert at City Hall
 - released two albums 'Interlude' and 'The Last Message' (天才與白痴)
 - 'The Last Message' broadcast in BBC Radio 'Family Favourites', and one single 'Genius, Idiot and Money' (天才白痴錢錢錢) attracted 15,000,000 audiences
- 1976 - May, two concerts at City Hall
- released single 'Street of London'
 - wrote 'Pocketful of Music' for local singer Chelsea Chan (陳秋霞)
 - September, first son Ryan born
 - December, the film 'Mr Boo: Private Eyes' (半斤八兩) with box income of HK\$8,500,000 , and 35,000 albums were sold out in South East Asia
- 1977 - 26 March, received 'The Best Sold Out Award' in the First Golden Record Award Ceremony
- April, one-month concert in South East Asia
 - released 'Sam Hui Best Selection' album (許冠傑精選)
 - two concerts at City Hall
 - summer, wrote title song for the film 'Crazy for Money' (龍戲珠) starring his brother Hui Kun Ying (許冠英)

- 'Pop Folk 77' at the Hong Kong Stadium
 - 29 August, Sam sang Elvis' songs at the Elvis Presley Commemoration Gathering
 - September, fan club renamed as 'The International Sam Hui's Fan Club', with Allan Ip and Angela Hau as chairpersons
- 1978
- February, second son Scott born
 - the album 'The Fortune God Comes' (財神到) included songs translated from Elvis' songs and 'Mr Boo: Private Eyes' received Platinum Record Award in the Second Golden Record Award Ceremony
 - May, adjudicator for the 'Sixth Miss Hong Kong Beauty Pageant'
 - July, the film and album 'The Contract' (賣身契) released, another box-breaking record
 - July, concerts at City Hall
- 1979
- February, 'The Contract' elected as one of the ten chosen Gold Songs organised by RTHK Television
 - April, 'The Contract' and 'Sam Hui Best Selection' received Platinum Record Award in the Third Golden Record Award Ceremony
 - April, 'Mr Boo' shown in Japan, Mr Boo's hit swept through Japan
 - June, participated in the Tokyo Music Festival as the Hong Kong delegate, received the TBS Award
 - released '79 Summer Collection'
 - six concerts at A.C. Hall
 - 'The Contract' shown in Taiwan, became the longest box-breaking screen of the time
 - Japanese version of 'Tricky Double Stars' released in Japan
 - Japanese magazine *Screen* published Sam on poster page
 - 22 December, another concert at the Hong Kong Stadium

- 1980 - 'Mr Boo' screened in the USA, both the title song and 'The Song of the Prodigal' (浪子心聲) were translated by Sam into English
- adjudicator for the 'Tsim Sha Tsui Susie Election'
 - July, 'Missing You Beautiful' (念奴嬌) album released
 - music video like 'The Puppet' (木偶) for TVB
 - December, '79 Summer Collection' received Platinum Record Award in the Fourth Golden Record Award Ceremony
- 1981 - the film and album 'Modern Bodyguard' (摩登保鏢)
- two concerts at the Hong Kong Stadium
 - 'Missing you beautiful' and 'Modern Bodyguard' received Platinum Record Award in the Fifth Golden Record Award Ceremony
 - left the Hui's Brothers' Company, joined Cinema City (Film Prod) Co. Ltd (新藝城),
 - received HK\$2,000,000 for the film 'Aces Go Places' (最佳拍檔), the salary shocked the Hong Kong film industry
- 1982 - released 'Can't Forget You ,Paperboat' (難忘你.紙船) album
- 'Aces Go Places' (最佳拍檔) broke the Hong Kong box office record for HK\$26,000,000
 - March, six concerts at the Elizabeth Stadium
 - April, participated in the First Asian Music Festival as Hong Kong delegate
 - August, 'Can't Forget You, Paperboat' received Platinum Record Award in the Sixth Golden Record Award Ceremony
 - September, two Japanese singles 'Chasing Dreams' and 'I love you' released
- 1983 - 'Aces Go Places II' (最佳拍檔大顯神通) shown in South East Asia and Australia at more than 130 cinemas, a historical event in the film industry

- 5-7 May, the first singer who held concerts at the newly established Hong Kong Coliseum in Hung Hom. The income of one of the concerts was dedicated to charity purpose
 - left Polygram and joined Contec Sound Media Ltd (康藝成音) and produced the record 'A New Beginning' (新的開始)
- 1984 - 'Aces Go Places III' (最佳拍檔：女皇密令) broke the Hong Kong box office again at HK\$30,000,000. Income of the first screening was dedicated to charity purpose
- release album 'I Like You Most' (最喜歡你)
 - July, a box-breaking comedy film 'Family Affairs' (合家福) for Cinema City
 - October, concert tour in USA and Canada
- 1985 - Sam joined Cineart (新藝寶) as another turning point in his career
- produced the album 'Be Playful' (最緊要好玩)
 - guest performer of New Star Singing Contest and Miss Aerobics for TVB
 - suffered from hypoxia while making the new film 'The Legend of Wisely' (衛斯理傳奇) in Nepal
 - released 'Heavy Weigh Collection', (斤兩十足) another best songs compilation
- 1986 - 'Aces Go Places IV' (最佳拍檔：千里救差婆) on screen
- October, 'Friends are Most Important' charity concert for the Hong Kong Diabetics Society and his friend Chou Lin Wah (周連華), an ex-Lotus member
 - released 'Champion of Energy' (魅力之冠) album
- 1987 - 'The Legend of Wisely' (衛斯理傳奇) on screen
- wrote the title song for the film 'Thirty Million Rush' (橫財三千萬)
 - released 'Trend of Band-playing' (潮流興夾BAND) album

- performed in the RTHK concert 'Super Bands Soar up in Sky' (勁 BAND 冲天飛)
 - July, released 'New Songs and Collection' (新曲與精選)
 - 'The International Sam Hui Fan Club' renamed as 'The Universal Sam Hui Fan Club' run on committee base
 - October, three concerts at the Hong Kong Coliseum
- 1988 - music video for 'The Fortune God Comes' for TVB's Chinese New Year programme
- appeared in his brother's film, 'Chicken and Duck Talk' (雞同鴨講)
 - invited his friends to write songs for him in the new album 'Sam & Friends'
 - November, produced 'Swordsman' (笑傲江湖) with Film Studio (電影工作室)
- 1989 - released 'Sam Hui 89' Collection'
- 'The Best New Partner' (最佳新拍檔) shown, the first screening for the Tung Wah Hospitals
 - April, ten concerts 'Ten Thousand People Sing Together' (萬人齊合唱) at the Hong Kong Coliseum
- 1990 - the film 'The Killer' (淚眼煞星) on screen
- rejoined Polygram, and produced a new album 'Hong Kong Sentiment 1990' (香港情懷 90)
 - two new films shown, 'Dragon from Russia' (紅場飛龍) and 'New Mr Boo: Private Eyes' (新半斤八兩)
- 1991 - openly expressed his wish to retire for the first time
- 1992 - 41 record-breaking Farewell Concerts at the Hong Kong Coliseum

CUHK Libraries



000249344